

2D* 9
TWELVE DISCOURSES

INTRODUCTORY

TO THE STUDY OF

D I V I N I T Y,

I N W H I C H

T H E P R I N C I P L E S

O F T H E

C H R I S T I A N R E L I G I O N

ARE ATTEMPTED TO BE LAID DOWN
WITH PLAINNESS AND PRECISION.

By EDWARD TATHAM, M. A.

L O N D O N:

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M,DCC,LXXX.

THE PRINCIPLES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

BY EDWARD TATAM, M.A.

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1905

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T o

JAMES TATHAM, GENT:

HONOURED SIR;

 Hilst the ambition of many authors is to send their productions into the world under the protection of some illustrious name, permit me, in my turn, to gratify my ambition by seeking a more humble patron; yet one, whom I esteem the highest honour to address; one, who, I am sure, will afford me every gracious allowance, every friendly indulgence, every kind excuse. And let me be emboldened to presume upon this farther hope, that, while the candid judge peruses the following imperfect sheets, he will view

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the work with the forgiving eye of a father.

To give the more essential materials of our religion a regular and consistent form, and one which, in my humble apprehension, they themselves suggest, in a way that is obvious and concise, is the object of this attempt. Such a design, I am well persuaded, were it executed with the ability I could wish, would be of very important use, in opening and convincing the minds of people in every sphere of life, by helping them to a general idea of the substance and æconomy of religion, and and by fixing it in the immoveable seat of the understanding. The first office of every teacher is to inculcate and explain the elements of his science, and to illustrate its general plan, that his auditors, being well and firmly grounded, may follow him with clearness and conviction through

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through the minuter parts, and reap the full advantage of every future lecture. Were this plan always adopted in Divinity, the most important of sciences, it would be the most effectual step to that edification so strongly recommended by the Apostle, and, perhaps, the ablest method of defeating the various attempts of the adversaries of our faith, by disarming the malignant influence of their partial representations, artful suggestions, and false insinuations, by balancing the unsettled mind, which wavers between novel opinions till it is bewildered and led wrong, and by guarding it against errors and misapprehensions of whatever kind,

Though this important subject may have already passed through more able hands, yet a new attempt to convey a general knowledge of that amazing system, in which all are interested, and which

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should

should, in some degree, be the study of all, can never be deemed useless or out of season, especially when we reflect on the new generations which are continually rising to be instructed in the rudiments of Christianity, and when we look forward to ages yet to come. But such a labour will be thought the less superfluous, when we look at those of the present day, and consider that, notwithstanding all the pains and instructions of their teachers, "very many, who would take it ill to be thought wanting in a competent share of religious knowledge, have yet to learn, or at least to digest, the first principles of their religion, and that few, in comparison, are either prepared, or much disposed, to go on to perfection. For there are those who exclude *Religion* from their scheme of *Morality*, or *Christianity* from their scheme of *Religion*, or who, professing Christianity, scarce know what *Redemption* means." We have

have other systems collected verbally from the works of eminent Divines of far higher and more particular merit, than any to which the following can aspire; but their prolixity and expence, their injudicious or more intricate design, the quantity of less interesting matter with which they are filled, and their abstruse learning dispossess them, in a great degree, of a general use, and leave room for farther attempts,

The ingenuous reader will grant me his indulgence, if, satisfied with the humbler praise of supplying an useful book, I appear less ambitious of the reputation of an able and accomplished author. To the merit of inventing new materials or of applying new arguments I have not the vanity to ground any claim, esteeming those by no means the least valuable which have been "long and much worn in the service of religion." But, out of

the vast number and variety that occur in the works of the learned, to select those that are the plainest, the most important, and immediately useful, if I may challenge so much merit, may be allowed the commendation of much industry, and of some judgment, however inferior the praise. And if, contrary to my design, I may sometimes use such arguments and considerations as are above the level of common capacities, the judicious reader will admit my apology, and attribute this defect to the particular nature of the subject, which unavoidably demands their application. If I may aspire to another piece of merit, but of this I am very diffident, it will be, perhaps, in the arrangement of these materials. And, if I have had the good fortune to adopt a style which is simple, nervous, and suited to the subject, I have, on that part, arrived at the summit of my wish. Resigning the arts
of

of elegance to those who can devote themselves to them, I rest contented with the humble meed of being plain and useful, and of pressing the essential interests of mankind. The subject, indeed, which is the grandest that can employ human attention, is incapable of being improved by mere embellishment. Its native and inherent dignity is able to support it under the hand of a ruder and less accomplished workman. In attempting, however, to comprize so large a province within the compass of so confined a tract, I am apprehensive lest, by studying to be concise, I become dull or obscure. Let my desire to do good to men apologize for every defect.

I am conscious that by sacrificing to art and ornament a considerable share of that utility of which I am solicitous, I might have more successfully consulted
my

my reputation as an elegant, or as a learned, divine. An easy descant on a few select and unconnected texts, which give scope to delicate sentiment, fine moral reflexion, and the effusions of a flowery imagination, and in which one might excite the softer, and sooth the severer, emotions of the breast, and liberally indulge in all the embellishments of language, in elegant terms, in a studied modification of sentences, in an exact and varied modulation of periods, in the pleasing metaphor and the fine allusion, would not fail to come more acceptable to a polished ear. And to present a few abstracted speculations on some of the topics in divinity, however disinteresting and unimportant; or to throw new light on some abstruser passages of scripture by an illustrative comment, would stand fairer to gratify a learned curiosity. From these two examples I have pursued a different mode,

mode, as both the end I have in view, and the persons for whose use I write, are very different.

However I may have acquitted myself in the execution of my plan, I have the satisfaction to reflect that it was well intended, and may hope that the importance of my theme will support its author and help in some measure to insure success to the undertaking. A portrait of that religion which is the foundation of every sanguine and solid hope, drawn from the book of life, and exhibited in a plain and regular form, though executed by the pencil of an inferior artist, must be possessed of that inherent beauty, which cannot fail to attract every virtuous eye, and to be contemplated with approbation by all who think themselves interested in the concerns of immortality. It will be acceptable to Christians of all denominations
and

and in every class of life, and may, we presume, be particularly useful to those who would devote themselves to the very honourable study and profession of Divinity, by introducing them into the temple of Religion, and by presenting before them a model in miniature of that sublime and extensive edifice to which they are to dedicate their labours, and in which, through the future periods of life, they are destined to walk humbly with their God.

Ambitious of the witness of my own heart, and of the approbation of all good men, I am tempted to lay the following imperfect treatise before the candid public, not without every sentiment of diffidence and conscious inferiority; and if it may have the good fortune to meet with Your's among the rest, I shall be rendered still more particularly happy.

To

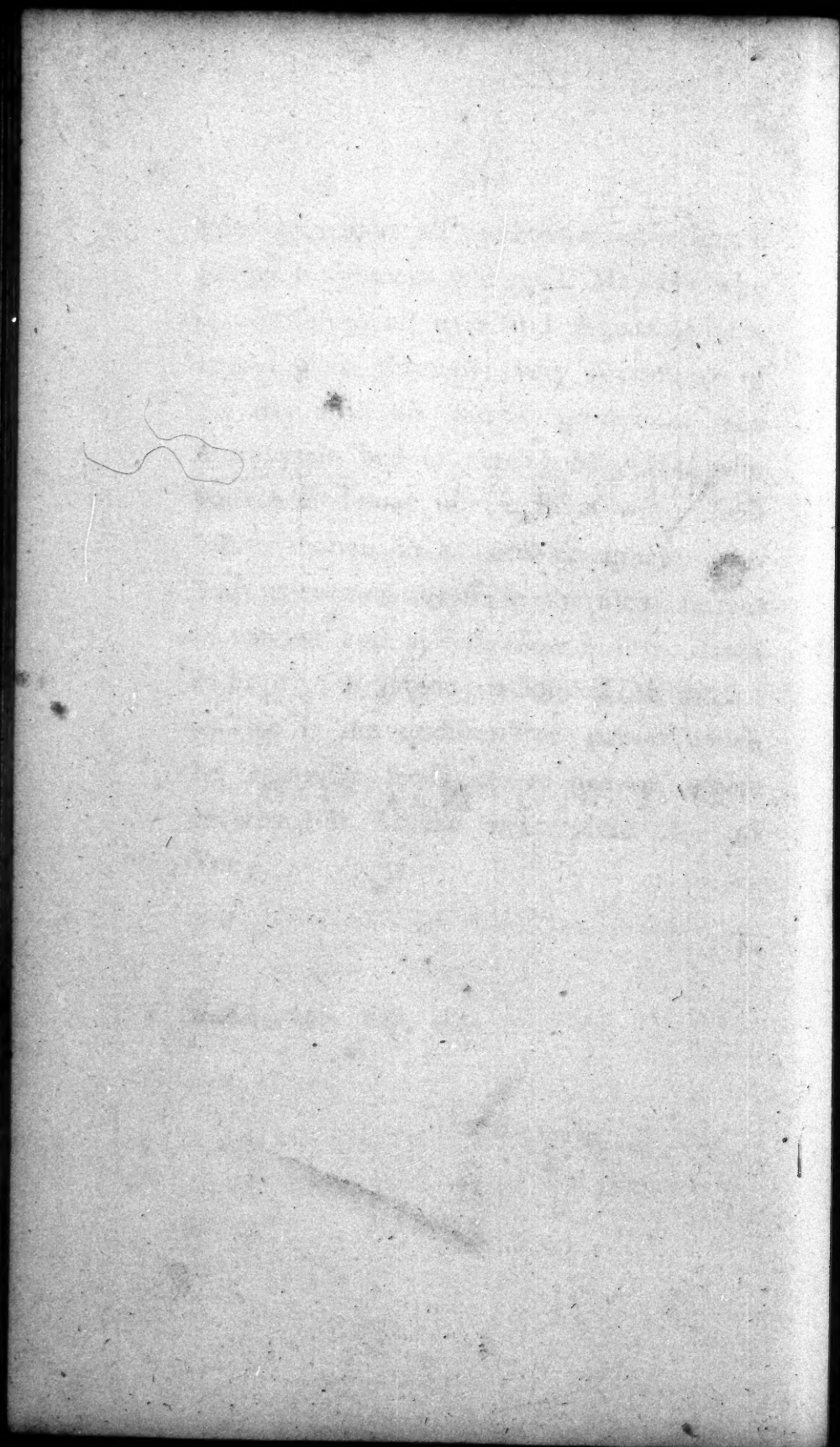
To You, whose gentle hand first bent my genius to those elegant studies, which I value as the honour and happiness of my life.—To You, whose generous heart hath supplied me with the means to prosecute them in the most liberal way—To You, whose unadorned example finished in the silent walk of virtue and religion it shall always be my study to imitate—To You, whose happiness flowing down the clear and even current of private domestic life it is the summit of my wishes to inherit—To You my first, my latest, my every obligation is justly due. And if gratitude be the sweetest emotion of the conscious breast, the world will surely pardon me while I indulge a moment in this short address.

May HE, to whom these pages are more immediately dedicated, shed down upon
your

your grey hairs all the honours of a long, a happy, a righteous old-age ! May He, who is merciful to all ages and degrees of men, attend You through every occurrence of the day with his sacred protection, and make your bed in peace ! May He, who hath made your sun to shine with useful lustre, though in a humbler sphere, prolong its evening course in the silent retreat of religion, and, at last, allow it to go down in hope with serene unclouded brightness ! — This is the undissembled prayer which he zealously sends up to heaven, whose reverence is in the next place due to You.

E. T.

Banbury, July 20th, 1780.



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TO

THE STUDY OF

DIVINITY.

INTRODUCTION

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RELIGION is the intercourse
R benignly established between heaven
R and earth, and may be called, with
sufficient propriety, The business between
God and Man. It consists of worship and
obedience, piety and charity, to be rendered
by the human party; and a blessed immor-
tality to be conferred by the divine. It in-
culeates just ideas of the great Father of the
universe, and dispenses a ray of celestial light,
B by

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by which we can view Ourselves, and the relation in which we stand respecting Him. By a train of high discoveries, it discloses those sublime and interesting truths, which are congenial to the divinest faculties of our nature, which satisfy our best and most ardent desires, and which shed over the human mind the enlivening beam of a future and unfading hope. The heart and the affections it sublimates and sanctifies. It regulates all our actions, grounds them on right principles, and points to their proper ends—The glory of God, and our good. To guide men, by its sacred lamp, through the hazardous walk of life with piety and integrity; to guard them against the temptations that allure on every side; to influence, to direct, to support them; to call their attention from terrestrial scenes and worldly pursuits to their spiritual and immortal interests; to raise the soul from earth, her present habitation, to heaven, the place of her future residence, is the office of **RELIGION**.

Natural Religion is the Law of God announced by the voice of Reason: The Christian Religion is the Law of God announced

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nounced by the voice of Revelation. The *former* introduces men to the knowledge of his being and attributes, informing them of duties and obligations due to him, and enabling them to judge of the quality of their actions, and of the nature of moral conduct. The evidence on which it rests, and on which reason grounds her operations, is that conscious sense and internal conviction, which are originally engraven on the heart; and the sanctions, by which it is enforced, are various disasters and misfortunes, which attend its violation here, together with a tremendous expectation, and excruciating horror, of an hereafter. The *latter* rises infinitely superior in every view, in its use, in its necessity, and in its end. It gives fuller and more particular information of the Deity, It establishes and enforces all the duties of the moral law, illustrates them with more immediate and more convincing light, and distinguishes them by clearer and preciser bounds. It not only elucidates the intimations derived from nature, but superadds a series of more illustrious and more interesting truths, by opening a fountain of superna-

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tural and sublimer knowledge. It is alone accommodated to the condition of man, is pressed upon him by most forcible motives and transcendent sanctions, and can alone invest him with immortality in glory. Yet, however superior to the Law of Nature, it is by no means independent upon it, but derives from thence its primary support. It presupposes, and appeals to such a prior Law, and stands indebted to it for its radical and fundamental evidence; for, till we have attained a competent knowledge of *good and evil*, and of the *moral* attributes of God by the Law written in our hearts and consciences, we are unable to judge of the pretensions of a *revealed* Religion, whether it be consistent with his nature, and whether it be worthy to proceed from him. From hence we derive the *internal* evidence of Christianity, which, though not sufficient of itself to support its claims, is of essential and important use, and, without which, all its external evidences would prove defective. Such is the indispensable utility of both these Laws, that the one cannot supersede the necessity of the other; and such is the indissoluble tie of their connexion, that the one

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is deficient and incomplete without the other; as one may suppose to be the case, since they both originate from the same invariable fountain of light and truth. They accord and correspond in mutual harmony, forming one great and everlasting system; for, as the Law of Nature is the basis and foundation, so the Law of the Gospel is the crown and consummation, of all the religious dispensations of heaven.

I. EVERY thing that has a meaning must have an End in view, which is the scope and purport to which it tends. Religion, which is justly of the highest estimation and most important use, is distinguished by the sublimest and most illustrious END—THE PERFECTION OF OUR NATURE, AND HAPPINESS AFTER THIS LIFE WHICH WILL LAST FOR EVER. What a comfortable, what a glorious, what an extatic End! Would you indulge the first and most powerful impulse of nature, an impulse which prompts you to consult your highest interest, and to aspire to your genuine felicity? Would you let these be your guide, and the sole directors of your conduct?—They will teach you to learn Religion in

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in preference to any other learning, and to postpone every work to the performance of its duties.

Before we enter upon the business of Religion by investigating the *Means* which it prescribes for the acquisition of this End, it may be proper to turn our thoughts to the contemplation of *Man*, who is to enjoy, and of *God*, who is to give, it.

II. It is certain that MAN, who is the SUBJECT of Religion, cannot be a candidate for immortal happiness, unless he will have an immortal existence; and it imports us to understand, how he will be in a capacity to enjoy this divine prerogative. The longest thread of mortal life is spun out in a small circuit of years. He dies, and his body is consigned over to the law of corruption. All that our senses could apprehend of him, is vanished away. *There is hope of a tree if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch of it will not cease. But man dieth and wasteth away, yea man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?* It must be his SOUL or SPIRIT, what this sacred penman terms the
ghost,

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ghost, which survives his body in a separate state of being, and which constitutes the principal Subject of future happiness.

Though the soul be a substance incapable of being the object of our senses, yet are we as certain of its existence, as of the existence of our bodies. This is a truth, which we feel in ourselves, which is grounded in our nature, and principled in our being, so that no one can deny it without renouncing that nature, and that very being; and we consequently find, that it was never disbelieved nor doubted in any age or nation, barbarous or civilized, if we except those subtle inquirers, who, abandoning the common ways of thinking, arrived at that wondrous sagacity to reason themselves out of all truth, and out of the use of both reason and common sense. Let us inquire into the nature and properties of the soul, and, probably, we may discover, That it is *distinct* from the body and of a *spiritual* nature, that it is *immortal*, and *capable of happiness* to all eternity.

THE Soul is, in this life, intimately united and attached to the body, and they conjunctively

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ively exhibit one uniform appearance. By the medium of the senses, the vehicles which convey the rudiments of all her knowledge, she holds an intercourse with external things; she performs her operations by the organs of the body, which are retarded, or even discontinued, when these are occasionally indisposed; and she is interested and involved in its pleasures, and its pains. But, that, in her own proper existence, she is different from the body and independent on it, may be evinced by the most easy and familiar deductions. No truth can be more frequently exemplified, than that men live and die. When alive, that is, whilst their souls and bodies are in union, they breathe, and move, and think, and reason; but, when these are disjoined by death, an amazing change ensues. That enlivening, invigorating, intelligent principle, which of late operated in the body with such various and amazing powers, is quite departed, and has reduced the man to a senseless corse, to a cold inactive heap of clay. Is this he who once vied with the roe in the agility, and with the ox in the strength, of his body? No; It is only

the

DISCOURSE I. 9

the fallen habitation, in which, for a time, his ethereal part took up its residence. Is this he, who so lately entertained us with his elegant conversation, who made all around him happy by his cordial friendship, who astonished the world with the force of his reason, or who charmed it with the sublimity of his imagination? No: *His soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler,* and has left nothing but its gross and corruptible weeds behind. These familiar remarks may convince us, that, in the human composition, there are two very different and *distinct* ingredients, That torpid mass which is devoted to corruption, which is properly the Body, and That active something which is departed we know not whither, which we call the Soul.

The peculiar and distinctive qualities of this invisible part of man we can easily investigate from its various operations. Convinced that it is the sole and efficient cause which enables us to love, and hate, and hope, and fear, to rejoice and to grieve, to judge, to reason, and to resolve, with every affection of the heart, and every exertion of the mind; from the nature of these effects we can easily recur

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to the properties of that cause, and may infer, with some degree of self-complacence and respect to ourselves, that the human Soul is of a *spiritual* nature, and most sublime construction.

And it merits our particular attention to remark how revelation coincides with the deductions of reason, in both these points. *The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.** Here is a plain distinction made between the soul and body in the primitive formation of man—the one being material, erected out of *the dust of the ground*—and the other spiritual, proceeding from *the breath of God*.

HAVING so far prepared the way, we may almost immediately pronounce, that the Soul must be *immortal*. When she has passed over the barrier which divides time from eternity, it is indeed impossible that we, who remain on the mortal side, should penetrate into the interdicted region of her abode to trace her existence there; yet have we no reason to

* Genesis ii. 7.

suppose,

DISCOURSE I. 11

suppose, that she dies, or will ever become extinct. Death is only the separation of the two constituent and essential parts of the human frame, and cannot possibly imply the extinction of either. After this disunion, it is highly reasonable to believe, that, as they are of quite different construction, their separate conditions will be determined by the principles of their respective constitutions. The Body, we know, is not annihilated; it only undergoes a variety of changes and revolutions in its form. Being composed of many different and dissimilar ingredients, it is destined to dissolution and corruption, the inevitable lot of all material, compounded things. The Soul, on the other hand, being of a contrary nature, spiritual, and uncompounded, can neither be dissolved nor disunited. She must ever remain one and the same indivisible being, consisting chiefly in the energy and exertion of her intellectual and moral powers. She is life itself, she gives life to man, and will herself be crowned with endless life. We have the evidence of sense to inform us, that the Body, being erected out of the dust, dissolves into its native element; which may

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convince us by the plainest law of analogie reasoning, that the Soul, being of a spiritual nature and divine construction, will likewise return to a state of spiritual existence; till the happy period arrive, when, if they have been united in grace and virtue here, they will both be completed in perfection, and reunited in glory.

HE, who erected this ethereal fabric, can indeed destroy it, by taking away its being; but, since he hath deigned to enlighten it with a ray of his divinity, to endow it with the principles of incorruption, and to invest it in immortal life, we cannot suppose he will at once blot out its light, without arraigning that *Wisdom*, which doth nothing in vain, and that *Goodness*, by which it was created. Possessed of the most brilliant and capacious powers, such as are calculated to dilate and enlarge in a regular progression, but which can never arrive at their consummation here, furnished with capacities that spurn this earthly and contracted element to soar up to purer and sublimer regions, kindled with an extinguishable thirst of knowledge, of virtue, and of immortality, who may dare to think,
that

that the human Soul will be abolished after the first and infant stage of her existence, without being suffered to arrive at that point of maturity, of which she is capable, and for which she was, consequently, designed? For her sake, it seems, the great Creator ranged in order the splendid œconomy of the universe, and erected herself of more divine construction, to be dignified as the sovereign mistress of the world; and what can more effectually derogate from the *Wisdom* of the invisible Architect, than, whilst she cultivates, and adorns herself with many accessions of improvement, during her residence on this sublunary theatre, she should only be making an approach to her extirpation? If, from her innate desire of happiness, she endeavours to love, to fear, to worship, to adore her Maker; and if, after experiencing the enraptured joy, which she derives from her spiritual communion with him; if, after she has had a foretaste of *the heavenly gift, and of the pleasures of the world to come*, her hope and consolation must be quenched for ever; that celestial desire, which is inseparable from her nature, which was conferred as her highest prerogative, by which she aspires to her native heaven,

will

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will be given in vain, and every divine affection will be disappointed of its corresponding object. This is an idea, which gives too severe a shock to human nature, and which the *Goodness* of the Deity forbids us to entertain.

His *Justice* is likewise immediately concerned in this fundamental point. For though, from a rational estimation of that unalienable perfection, and the divine superintendence of all human events, there results the most positive certainty of an equitable distribution of rewards and punishments; yet, when we look abroad into the lives and fortunes of men, that very certainty will deceive us, and we shall be confounded at the indiscriminate appointments of good and evil, unless we extend our prospect to a future and more perfect scene. If we throw our attention over every part of the creation beside the rational, we may acknowledge the hand of the most consummate wisdom and equality to be universally displayed; but when we contemplate that distinguished species, we frequently see *just men, to whom it happeneth according to the works of the wicked, and again wicked men, to whom*

DISCOURSE I. 15

whom it happeneth according to the works of the righteous, and can we suppose the Almighty will leave this inequality and imperfection to rest upon the lords of his creation unremoved for ever? No: the Lord reigneth let the earth be glad. He reserves the full exercise of his righteous administration to that future period, in which their souls, being naturally immortal, are evidently intended to live, when sovereign Justice will lift her unerring scale, and by a perfect retribution adjust every irregularity and defect, and *all men shall receive according to their works.* Look at man only as an inhabitant of this earth, and all is mystery. He empleads the equity of his Maker. View him in the light only of a probationer in the field of trial, contending to regain his primæval glory, as a candidate for an immortal inheritance, as a pilgrim travelling through the valley of tears and sorrows to an habitation of celestial repose, and the mystery dispells. All is consistent, just, and good. Whilst other beings fill up the extent of their capacities, and arrive at their destined end, in this temporary abode, man receives only the rudiments of his existence here, and is to be transplanted

transplanted into a region more friendly to his nature and more congenial to his frame, where his virtues, after they have been approved, will meet their full reward, and will be carried to the summit of perfection in an endless life.

THAT this distinct, this spiritual, and immortal substance is *capable of enjoying happiness* in the several stages of her future existence, can admit of no doubt, when we view those native and independent qualities with which she is endowed. During her residence in the body, she is the sacred repository of all the exquisite feelings, and refined affections, of the heart. Pleasure and enjoyment of the purest and sublimest species, of the most permanent and independent nature, of the widest and most uncircumscribed extent, are her peculiar properties; and, as soon as she shall be disencumbered and released from this prison of clay, she will be in a capacity to exert them in a higher and more extended sphere, and to derive from them a more exquisite and sublime delight. Such is the improvement she will make by death, which
will

DISCOURSE I. 17

will receive continual accessions through the immensurable stages of eternity : for, since it is her peculiar prerogative to be modelled after the one eternal Spirit, her employment will be to imitate Him, who is infinite in perfection ; and, as she will have unlimited room to make advances towards him, every enlargement will of itself bring fresh delight, and will be rewarded with a still higher accumulation of happiness and glory.

How sublime, how excellent, how divinely glorious is the Soul of man ! Whilst he resides here, she confers all the dignity and distinction on his nature. After death, she removes to a more independent and consummate existence, and is capable of receiving unbounded increases of felicity through endless ages.

THE instruction resulting from these joint considerations is of most critical and decisive import. If we are possessed of so divine and valuable a principle, of what moment should we esteem it, to possess ourselves of that future inheritance which will complete us in bliss ; for, we should well remember, that as the Soul is capable of pain as well as plea-

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sure,

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sure, we are as subject to an accumulation of the one, as of the other? Should it not be the great business of that inconsiderable portion of our existence, which terminates on the margin of the grave, and which is destined to fix our final and irreverfible lot, to attend to the improvement of our immortal part? If we make good its claim to a state of happiness hereafter, through the avenue of death we shall pass from the condition of men to that of Angels; if we fail, we shall find our portion allotted us in the region of despair. *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

At length the important question, which opens the great business of Religion, presents itself before us, *What shall we do to inherit eternal life?*—How must man arrive at this immortal state of happiness?—and From whom must he receive it? The solution of the latter interrogation will pave the way to the solution of the former.

III. Review the dignity and divinity of the human soul. Look at the body, consider

its

D I S C O U R S E I. 19

its mechanism, its symmetry, its beauty, and the uses of its parts, *How fearfully and how wonderfully is it made!* These two constituent ingredients of the human composition could never exist without some creating Intelligence to form, and to unite, them. Of what incredible number and variety of parts are our bodies framed, and how wonderful are the involuntary motions and operations of each? With what unerring skill are all the different organs disposed, and directed to useful purposes? With what exquisite address are all the senses adapted to converse with their respective objects, and how indefatigable in conveying ideas into the mind? But how does that mind excel the body? How sublime are all its faculties, the memory, the passions, the reason, the imagination! And, if we stretch an eye over other parts of the creation, we shall be lost in the midst of beauty, variety, number, magnificence, and wisdom. Whether we turn our attention inwardly on ourselves, or outwardly on the universal face of nature; whether we contemplate the resplendent glory of the celestial canopy, or the variegated beauty of the terrestrial scene; all, all proclaims,

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in awful and convincing language, that all-wise, all-powerful, eternal Architect, who created and erected all. *The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words to the end of the world.* This is the universal voice of God, by which he commands the senses, the reason, and the faculties which he hath made, to confess, and to pay homage, to their maker. Surely, exclaims the eloquence of Solomon, *vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and cannot, out of the good things that are seen, know Him that is, neither, by considering the works, acknowledge the work-master.* But deem either fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent waters, or the lights of heaven, to be the Gods that govern the world. With whose beauty if they being delighted, think them to be gods, let them know how much better the Lord of them is, for the first Author of beauty hath created them. If they are astonished at their power and virtue, let them understand by them, how much mightier He is that made them: For, by the greatness and beauty of the creature proportionably the maker of it is known. This omnipotent
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DISCOURSE I 21

and illustrious Being, who hath engraven his image on the tables of the heart, and *whose invisible things, even his eternal Power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made*—This God, who ever did, who ever doth, and who ever will, exist; of perfect Justice, of inviolate Truth, of unfathomable Wisdom, of unbounded Goodness; the Father and Preserver of the universe; the sovereign Disposer of all things—This God, who framed our bodies with such transcendent art, who inspired our souls, who endued them with divine prerogatives, invested them with spiritual powers and ardent aspirations after the felicity of heaven—This God, himself eternally Happy, is only able to make us happy for ever. He is the OBJECT of Religion. *All power belongeth unto God. He is Almighty, and can do every thing. Heaven is his throne, and earth is his footstool. His Name is excellent, and his Glory and Power are above heaven and earth.*

IV. HAVING contemplated the sublime Object of Religion, to whom are due obedience, and worship, and gratitude, and praise, who is himself *eternal life*, the author and fountain
of

22 DISCOURSE I.

of eternal life, and to whom man must sue for this celestial gift, the course of the inquiry naturally points to the MEANS of obtaining it at his hands. He is the sovereign Lord of all things, and *whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doeth he in heaven and in earth.* The happiness, therefore, to which mortals should aspire is not only in his absolute power to bestow, but entirely depends upon his will; for *He is the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, and he will do all his pleasure.* The gift of God is eternal life, and the only MEANS by which men can obtain it, is TO PLEASE HIM,

To please God constitutes the whole substance of Religion on the part of man. On the performance of this high behest, He, *who is ever blessed*, will admit us, after death, into his presence, to partake of that superlative felicity in which he is inshrined; because, by pleasing him in this world, we shall be qualified to enjoy him in the next, to copy his perfections, to participate his nature, and to behold his glory. He is the original uncreated Spirit, the archetype of man. On Him the immortal and congenial soul entirely depends. In Him alone it can finally acquiesce. In
Him

DISCOURSE I. 23

Him alone it can be happy. To fear God, to obey his commandments, to cherish a sense of his present and future favour, is the proper employment, and the genuine delight, of rational and immortal beings. *My Soul, wait thou still upon God, for thy hope is in him; He is thy rock and thy salvation. He shall defend thee under his wings, and thou shalt be safe under his feathers; his faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

LET US remember, that *Future Happiness* is the *End* of Religion—The *Human Soul* is the *Subject* destined to enjoy it—God is the *Object* from whom it must proceed—and *To please Him* the only *Means* of obtaining it.

The intent of this preliminary discourse is only to open the door, and to introduce the reader into the august temple, of Religion. In this heavenly-concerted fabric, as he advances, he will find the veil, which is spread over his mortal eyes, in part removed; objects of divine amazement and extatic glory will be opened to his view; *the way of Life and the way of Death* will be presented to his choice.

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DISCOURSE II.

Of the COVENANT of WORKS and the
FALL of ADAM.

ROMANS V. 12.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

TO PLEASE GOD, that sublime and invisible Intelligence, who pervades the whole system of nature, the Father and Soul of the universe, is the important function of Religion, the MEANS, which lead to its immortal and inconceivable reward.

When we would please an inhabitant of this inferior world, common prudence directs us to consult his will and disposition, and to act in compliance with them; and in order to please Him *who inhabiteth eternity*, his will is,
first,

DISCOURSE II. 25

first, to be consulted, and, then, to be obeyed.

The plan of this discourse shall be, first, to contemplate the *Will* of God; secondly, to recognise the *Inability* of men to perform it; and, thirdly, to investigate the cause of their *Depravation*, from which this inability was derived.

I. THREE methods present themselves of arriving at the knowledge of the Almighty's *WILL*. The notices derived from *Conscience*—the light of *Reason*—and the voice of *Revelation*.

God hath not created and left us in this dark region of the earth without a witness of himself. He hath implanted *Conscience* in the human breast, as a sacred monitor, to suggest the eternal difference between good and evil, which are engraven on the heart in the most opposite and indelible characters. As a divine and authoritative judge, he presents us with joy and sweet complacency, when we have adhered to the former; but, on the commission of the latter, it torments us with fear and dire remorse. This joy, we are con-

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vinced

vinced by the dictates of every sound and well-instructed mind, is the certain presage of a reward; and this *fear*, the sure anticipation of merited punishment. Now *rewards* and *punishments* are the invariable sanctions of a *law*, and every law recognises, of course, a rightful *lawgiver* invested with competent authority. This joy cannot, however, be that which results from the hopes of a temporal reward, for the good from which it springs is not unfrequently the reverse of worldly advantage; neither can this fear be of temporal punishment, for the evil it proceeds from, is often perpetrated in secret, and for ever suppressed from human cognizance. Who, then, can this lawgiver be, whose sovereign power our hearts confess, but the *God* of heaven, whose law, as he is supreme, can be no other than his *will*? We may, consequently, infer, that these conscious sensations of *joy* and *terror* proclaim all *good* to be consonant to the *Divine Will*, and all *evil* to be equally repugnant to it, and prelude to that great tribunal, from which each of them will receive its just desert. In a word, *Conscience* is *God* within us informing us both of his *Being*, and of his *Will*;

DISCOURSE II. 27

Will: for, by teaching us to *fear* him, it informs us that *he is*, and by admonishing us of *good* and *evil*, it indicates his *will*; since whatever is agreeable to his will, is good, and whatever is not, is evil. We here arrive at the fundamental distinction between *Virtue* and *Vice*, which is not grounded on an arbitrary precarious principle, but which rests on a basis that is immoveable, eternal, and divine. Thus are we informed of the WILL of God by the law written in our hearts, our consciences bearing witness,

These suggestions are farther confirmed by the suffrage of *Reason*: For the universal Father of men and angels, the Creator of innumerable orders of intelligent and moral agents of various degrees of excellence, must be himself possessed of sublimer excellence than them all, if we allow the cause to be superior to the effect, HE who sits in the highest heaven inshrined in glory, is infinite in Power, and Wisdom, and Understanding; he is infinite in Holiness, in Justice, and in Goodness; and, as he is the sovereign Lord of the universe, he is the standard of all Perfection.

But the pure and sublime nature of the
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Deity

Deity is more fully established by the voice of Revelation, which informs us that the *Father which is in heaven, is perfect* *. *His work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he†. I the Lord which sanctify you, am holy‡. The Lord is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works||. And, to present to the human intellect a fuller idea of his transcendent holiness, a comparison is drawn between him and the purest and most exalted things, of which men can have conception. The heavens are not pure in his sight. And his angels he charged with folly††. From these several intimations of the Deity we can immediately infer his WILL, which cannot possibly be at variance with his nature, and may conclude, from the combined authority of Conscience, Reason, and Revelation, that it is holy, just, and good.*

II. If, after surveying the inviolate holiness of the Divine Will, we turn our attention to an estimate of the thoughts and actions of mankind in general, how shall we be shocked at their immense impurity, and at their palp-

* Matt. v. 48. † Deut. xxxii. 4. ‡ Levit. xxi. 8.

|| Psal. cxlv. 17. †† Job iv. 18.

DISCOURSE II 29

able opposition to it? Even the efforts of the best of men will be found deficient in the balance, and tinged with such a mixture of vice, as will render them unable to aspire to the purity of heaven. Appalled at the sense of her own infirmity how does Human Nature shrink at the contemplation of her God!

That *Conscience*, which admonishes us of his Will, apprises us, at the same time, of our total *INABILITY* to perform it. How often do our hearts suggest, that we think and do what we know to be wrong, and that we find it out of our power to do right? *That which we do, we allow not; for what we would, that we do not, but what we hate, that do we.*

Reason too, that boasted prerogative of human nature, drags the heavy chain of lust and passion, and however she may struggle to be emancipated from the tyranny of their yoke, in vain does she attempt to break their bonds asunder. We feel a perverseness in our nature counteracting the dispassionate verdict of the understanding, and throwing down all the barriers, which our feeble resolution can raise against it. *I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present*

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present with me ; but to perform that which is good I find not. I find, then, a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me ; For I delight in the law of God after the inward man ; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.

And, if our thoughts and actions stand arraigned at the humble bar of our own breasts, how vile will the purest of our sentiments and exertions prove at the hallowed tribunal of the Most High ? If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things, whose divine Revelation informs us, that, *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after God—They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good*. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God†. Conscious of her native weakness, ashamed of her ignorance and sin, convicted by her own internal feelings, rebellious against the voice of reason, impeached by the word of*

* Psalm xiv. 1, 2, 3. † Rom. iii. 23.

DISCOURSE II. 31

God, Human Nature is scarce able to look up to that all-powerful and beneficent hand, out of which she originally came, and which still continues to pour down upon her the heavenly dew of both temporal and spiritual blessings.

Thus Conscience, Reason, and Revelation join issue to give information of the Deity, and to bring in this corroborated verdict, That the purest of our thoughts and actions are so tinged with imperfection, as to render us quite inadequate to the performance of his Will. The wisest and the best of men are weak and sinful creatures, sentenced to labour, to sorrow, to sufferings, and to death here; and exposed to the arm of the Avenger hereafter. *Oh wretched man that thou art, who shall deliver thee from the body of this death!* Thou art born capable of happiness or misery, and thou art born never to die; but, alas, whether that immortality shall be happy, depends on pleasing Him who gave thee being, which is above the reach of thy native power. *Surely vain is man, and evil are all the imaginations of his heart; but God is a God of Mercy, as well*

as of Judgment.

III. This survey of the natural *Inability* of men brings home an interesting question to our serious reflections, How could that illustrious Being, whom we have so lately contemplated as residing in native and exhaustless Goodness, and as the standard of Perfection, be the author of such weak imperfect creatures? It is impossible. *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children.* Can we believe that man came originally out of the hands of Him, whose works are perfect, thus wretchedly deformed? No: For the author of beauty hath created him. His primitive constitution must have been corrupted and depraved. Since its first construction, the human fabric must have felt a violent convulsive shock, which hath mutilated and deranged the genuine workmanship of its infallible Architect. Indeed, in whatever state of disorder it may be involved, those sublime capacities and affections of the Soul, her inherent excellence, her lofty intellect, her native energy, which shine, with conspicuous lustre, out of the ruins in which she lies deformed, betray

illust-

illustrious traits of its primæval glory. Proceed we to investigate the cause of this DEPRAVATION, which hath taken place in the constitution of man.

If we survey him from the moment of his first appearance on the stage of life, to that of his final exit, in vain shall we seek for it within that period. We may all rest satisfied that our corruption was derived from our parents with the principles of life, and may join with the royal Psalmist in this humiliating confession, *Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.* And, since we know it to be universal, the question resolves into this alternative, Either there must have been a time, when all the inhabitants of the earth suffered a change in their nature, from whence it devolved on their descendents: Or this change must be referred to those *Two*, who were the original *Parents* of the human race, and by them it was intailed on all future generations.

Review, then, the history of mankind through the annals of time, and diligently inquire, whether either of these changes ever beset the human race: You will never read

or hear of any universal act of depravation, but will find mankind, in every age, weak and sinful, as at the present hour. But there is a history of the highest antiquity and most indubitable authority, which informs us, how the *Two primitive Parents* fell by transgression from that exalted station, in which they were placed by the forming hand of God. It came from the pen of Moses, the great Jewish Lawgiver, about 3200 years ago, and, in a grandeur and simplicity of style, which distinguish the character of a sacred historian, informs us, how the world with its apparatus and inhabitants was first erected, and that *last of all*, to crown the terrestrial fabric, *God created man in his own image*, investing him with universal and supreme dominion *.

WHAT were the peculiar and distinctive features of the divine image impressed upon the human frame in its primitive formation, it may be impossible in any particular manner to determine, as the historian remains silent on that point, and, on account of the cloud which now darkens the human intellect, it

* Gen. i. 26.

may lie out of the sphere of reason to investigate, perhaps to comprehend. We may, in general, presume, that man was created *holy* in imitation of the archetype and author of his being, and *happy* as he is happy, in imitation of the divine felicity. As he was formed *perfect*, we may conclude, that he was endued with all those virtues and abilities, which stand opposed to the vices and infirmities of *imperfect* man. Possessed of all the beauty corporal substance could receive, his body enjoyed perpetual youth and unexhausted vigor, a stranger to pain and to fatigue. An intire rectitude subsisted in all the faculties of his soul. Furnished with all useful knowledge, perhaps intuitively, his Understanding was clear, serene, angelic; his Will was the spontaneous result of his understanding; and his Passions were implicitly subservient to the dictate of his will. That wonderful and complex machine which is fixed within the frame of the human breast, consisting of so many sublime, and so many different, movements, performed its revolutions in unmolested order, harmony, and peace. All was beauty without; all was excellence

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within. He felt no law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin.

And, to complete his image on the person of man, the beneficent Father superadded his divine and supernatural endowments. By his special favour and protection, and free access to the Tree of Life, his body was rendered incorruptible and immortal. His eyes were strengthened to sustain the resplendent glory of the Godhead. His mind was fortified to bear his more immediate presence. He was fully illumined by his Spirit, and enabled to approach to the high honour of a direct intercourse with the Deity. And though his Paradise was earthly and material, it was formed by the same unerring hand. Blest with the verdure of perpetual spring, with spontaneous and perennial fruits, it was guarded and attended by the holy angels, and was the hallowed abode of perfect happiness, which was incapable of being diminished only by the voluntary default of its inhabitant. How exalted, how complete, how divine was man as he issued out of the hand of his maker! *And because it was not*
good

DISCOURSE II. 31

good for man to be alone, the Lord made woman to be a help meet for him,* that is, with the same endowments of mind and body.

Thus were the parents of mankind created upright†—pure, innocent, and happy, as creatures of an all-perfect, holy, and ever-happy Being. They were invested with an inherent power both to *know*, and to *do*, his will, which last was the the tenure by which they held their sublime and enviable estate; for Holiness and Happiness are inseparably united in the Deity, and are incapable of existing apart in any other being. Hence a solemn league ensued between Him and them, “That, if they and their posterity continued in a voluntary obedience to him, they should remain ever happy and immortal: But in consequence of disobedience, they should forfeit these advantages, and be subject to misery and death.” This is termed by Divines, THE FIRST COVENANT or THE COVENANT OF WORKS, the conditions of which are *Perfect Obedience* on the part of man, and *Happiness and Immortality* on the part of God. On this nice and critical point,

* Gen. ii. 18. † Eccles. vii. 29.

therefore

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therefore—the observance or infrinquent of this single stipulation, the future fate of all the human race was destined to depend.

IN this exalted state of purity and felicity was man originally placed by the hand of Omnipotence, and that he might arrive at the sublime end of his destination—that he might both obey the will of God, and enjoy the fruits of that obedience, his conduct was left to his own *free* and voluntary choice. To afford scope to the exertion of his celestial powers, to give him an opportunity of approving himself, in some measure, deserving the blessings he had received, and of advancing to still higher exaltation by the exercise of his obedience and of his gratitude, the Almighty enjoined him a single negative Command, leaving it in his own determination to obey or not, without which his obedience could have no value. *And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there put he man whom he had formed. And out of the ground he made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge also of good and*

and evil*. And the Lord commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die †. This simple command, unfortunately for all the human race, he disobeyed. The Serpent (or the Devil) having beguiled Eve by his subtlety, she took of the fruit of the Tree, of which God said to the man and the woman, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die, and she did eat, and gave also to her husband, and he did eat ‡. Such was the disastrous event, an event big with importance, an event which drew after it the most amazing train of consequences that has distinguished the annals of mankind, and which will extend, through all ages and nations, to the end of time. How perfect soever human nature might be in its primitive glory, and however able to perpetuate its native felicity; yet, as it was never of that sublime and ethereal essence which neither slumbers nor sleeps, it was not possessed of such a divine consummation as to exclude the possibility that its felicity should be diminished. This

* Gen. ii. 8, 9. † Gen. ii. 16, 17. ‡ Gen. iii.

high prerogative is sacred to Him alone, *who is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.* The malicious subtlety of the temptor succeeded, and the DEPRAVATION of man was accomplished under the specious semblance of being made wiser, happier, and more divine.

By this one offence committed in violation of the direct authority of the great Father of universe, by whom they had been favoured with singular privileges and emblems of distinction above every inhabitant of his terrestrial orb, and of whom they were admitted to the honour of more immediate presence and familiar converse; by this one fault redoubled by palpable infidelity and contempt of his promises and threats, by the highest instance of ingratitude in reposing confidence in the infernal Power, rather than in Him whose bountiful goodness they had so recently and so liberally experienced, by a sacrilegious pride in emulating to be as God, and by envy in thinking he had withheld the advantages to which their nature was entitled; by all this committed against the clearest conviction of conscience, with minds enlightened to discern, with wills fortified to resist, without

out any outward compulsion to force, or any inward irresistible propensity to induce, them; by this one crime aggravated by a strong confederacy of every soul and malignant passion, the Covenant of the Most High was infringed by our First Parents, and; as their holiness and happiness were inseparably united, the one was forfeited when the other was lost. Their ambition to aspire to a higher station, than that, which it pleased their Author to allot them, seemed, indeed, to accomplish one part of their desire; for they became as Gods knowing good and evil*. Before, they only knew the former. They had only experienced the bounty, the benevolence, the communion, of their Maker. Evil was kept remote from their persons, and from their thoughts. As soon as this act of disobedience opened their minds to let in this fatal distinction, that same disobedience dispossessed them of the power of doing good, and left them prone to the commission of evil. Then were the hallowed scenes of ceaseless joy and self-complacence changed for the sad reverse of bitterest remorse and self-contempt. Secure tranquility and immortal peace were bartered,

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in a moment, for trembling apprehensions and wild despair. The holy robe of innocence, with which they were cloathed and protected from the pollution of Sin, and by which they were shielded from the arrows of misfortune and of Death, was removed, and they were found *naked*,* exposed to their severe and combined attacks.

Thus human nature FELL from its primitive eminence. The image of God was in great measure erased from the person of man. He lost all the divine and supernatural endowments, with which he was originally adorned. His natural powers, both intellectual and moral, which lately shone with brilliant lustre, and harmonized in action, were now enveloped by the cloud of ignorance, and oppressed with darkness and disorder. The eye of Reason lost its clear intuitive light, it became dim and obscure, distracted with opinions, embarrassed with errors, perplexed with difficulties; so as but imperfectly to *discover* the Will of God. At the same time that Reason lost her light, she lost her sway. The Passions became rebellious, and usurped her throne.

* Gen. iii. 10.

His

DISCOURSE II. 43

His heart and affections were corrupted, so that man could not *perform* that perfect Will. The divine œconomy was broken and overthrown. Man was alienated from the love of his Maker. The loss of immortality in happiness was the fatal consequence,

THUS was Corruption derived from our First Parents to all the human race, and conveyed through every generation by a perpetual entail. And, though the just God, with whatever disapprobation he may view our native deformity, may not actually punish us for what was not our personal offence; yet he may justly withhold that happiness, which they enjoyed in consequence of their innocence, but to which we have no title, since that innocence was lost. This *negative* punishment results directly from primeval Sin.

Still a greater misfortune remains untold. In consequence of our corruption we have all committed many actual deliberate and voluntary sins, against the voice of Reason, against the remonstrance of Conscience, against the word of God, being *filled with all unrighteousness*, prone to vices of all degrees and sins

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of all dimensions. As by disobedience sin entered into the world, so it triumphed till it became *exceeding sinful*. Hence are we subject to that *positive* punishment, which the justice of heaven demands for the violation of its laws, and the contempt of its authority. The sentence of death is passed upon us, and we have no power to arrest its execution. Even the deepest repentance will not avail us; for, as to refrain from contracting new debts will never discharge the old, so repentance cannot cancel those sins, which are already committed. And should these be forgiven, yet are we as liable to sin in every future moment, as we were in those that are past. Nothing can re-instate man in his primitive glory, but the Pardon of heaven, to erase his past offences, joined to the Assistance of heaven, to secure him from future sins.

The wages of SIN is DEATH. Death in every comprehension. First, by Sin we are subject to a separation of soul and body, and to a corruption of the latter, which we call *natural* Death. Secondly, by the pollution of Sin, the soul is disqualified for the society and enjoyments of heaven; this is *spiritual* Death,

But,

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But, thirdly, those exquisite punishments denounced against Sin in the holy Scriptures; punishments which no iniquity can escape, no artifice can elude, no imagination can equal; which are inconceivable in degree, and endless in duration—these actual punishments, which are the wages of Sin, can have no fitter appellation than *eternal Death*. *Wherefore, as by one man Sin entered into the world, and Death by Sin; and so Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

But, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, of his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a new and lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.

To explain the tenure of this new and heavenly inheritance, and how we must secure our title to it, will be adopted for the subject of the ensuing pages.

DISCOURSE III.

Of the Obedience of CHRIST, the COVENANT of GRACE, and the MEDIATORIAL OFFICES.

ROMANS V. 18, 19.

Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgement came upon all men to condemnation ; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life : For, as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners ; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.

IN the fall of Adam lie the root and foundation of the Christian Redemption ; for, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

By the disobedience of our First Parents
the

the original Covenant being infringed, the tyrants Sin and Death, with passion, sorrow, pain, disease, and every species of misery in their train, enslaved the human race. *All the world became guilty before God, and devoted to perdition.* But that almighty and ever gracious Being, to whom Mercy and Love are peculiarly essential, seeing man, whom he had enriched with heavenly qualities, whom he had exalted as the lord of his creation, and whom he had destined to be happy in the imitation and enjoyment of himself, forfeit in a moment all these endowments, out of the exhaustless treasures of his Love, benignly condescended to re-instate him, after a short period of discipline, in his original purity and glory. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth, look how wide also the east is from the west; so far hath he set our Sins from us! Yea as a father pitieth his own children, even so the Lord is merciful on them that fear him; for he knoweth whereof we are made, he remembereth we are but dust.

The Holiness of the Deity renders him an
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invincible enemy of sin, which is a violation of his sovereign will, and rebellion against his supreme authority; and that inviolate and infallible Justice, by which he governs the universe according to the law of his own infinite perfection, demands that it should be excluded from happiness, and actually punished. Sinners have, therefore, no refuge but in the tender affection of his pardoning Mercy. But this Mercy does not so immediately imply, that he will forgive, as his Justice does, that he will punish; for it is to be remembered, that, as Holiness is the sovereign attribute of his nature, to which all the rest conspire, and with which they harmonize, his Mercy cannot interfere to pardon what this superior and most essential prerogative calls upon his Justice to chastise, till that Justice be by some means satisfied. The attributes of the one supreme and eternal Essence are incapable of variance or disorder. Such is the dilemma, in which man is placed between the Justice and the Mercy of God, and the Wisdom of Omniscience could only project the stupendous plan of his Redemption, by which he may be pardoned and restored, at the same time that all the

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attributes of the Deity are reconciled and adjusted, by giving his Son to fulfil all righteousness, and to be a propitiation for our sins.

THE manner in which this great work was conducted, as it is delineated in the holy Scriptures, is full of divine and solemn admiration; and where is the wonder, if, in the execution of such a heavenly-concerted plan, some things should occur beyond the line of a mortal understanding to fathom, or that divine objects should appear to human eyes through an obscure and clouded medium? For hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us; but the things that are in heaven, who hath searched out, and the divine counsel who hath known? Reason stands astonished at the incomprehensible ways of heaven, unable to oppose them, and, in silent adoration, embraces and approves.

To repair the original breach made by the father of mankind, and to preclude its fatal consequences, JESUS CHRIST the eternal Son of God, who was with him in the beginning *;

* John i. 2.

whom

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whom he hath appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power*; in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily†, descended from the bosom of his Father, and cloathed himself with human flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever‡. He was born of woman. He had a human body, and a human soul. His faculties, his passions, his appetites were the same with those of other men. He ate, he drank, he hungered, he thirsted, he suffered pain and death itself. In this only was he different from all men, that he was exempt from sin; for, though he took his human nature from the substance of his human mother, yet his Father was divine; and Lo! a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased††. He was fully possessed of the divine nature, being conceived by the Holy Ghost, and uniting in one person both God and Man. To comprehend the manner of this union, is a field of knowledge from which mortals are

* Heb. i. 2, 3. † Col. ii. 9.

‡ Rom. ix. 5. †† Mat. iii. 17.

interdicted; yet we know that He, who created and united our souls and bodies, was able to form this other mysterious union of the divine and human natures. Our business is only to weigh the great and gracious intent of the incarnation of the Son of God, and to avail ourselves of its important uses.¹

The first work, in which this illustrious personage engaged, was to take off the weight which devolved upon the human race from the offence of its founder, and to cancel his transgression by performing the Will of God in perfect OBEEDIENCE. When, therefore, he publicly entered upon his commission, his address to the sacred person, by whose hands he was baptized in the river Jordan, was, *It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness* *. He withstood the most powerful temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that ever man underwent, and triumphed over them. The whole tenor of his life was an uniform series of virtue, unsullied by the least tarnish of sin, devoted to the service of his heavenly Father, and to the salvation of his earthly brethren. *His meat was to do the will of him that*

* Matt. iii. 15

*sent him, and to finish his work *. He constantly went about doing good †. And to destroy the works of the devil ‡ was the object of his life. The Father, saith he, hath not left me alone, for I do the things that please him ††. Thus is the Obedience of Christ an effectual antidote to the diobedience, of Adam. His Name shall be called JESUS, because he shall HEAL the infirmities of his people and SAVE them from their Sins. In those days, saith the Lord, I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. The nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall be their glory, And this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

Having, thus, by his perfect and complete Obedience, discharged the Condition of the First Covenant on the part of man, and done justice to the inviolable prerogatives of heaven, he obtained the reward promised on the part of God, devolving it on his earthly brethren as a free and voluntary bequest. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so, by the righteousness

* John iv. 34

† A. B. x. 38.

‡ 1. John iii. 8.

†† John vii. 29.

of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.

If it was in the power of one man to ruin the human race, can we wonder that it should be in the power of another to redeem it? And, if the First Adam, who drew a curse over the earth, was formed in an extraordinary manner by the hand of God, why should we wonder that the Second Adam, who was destined to withdraw that curse and to spread over it a blessing, was made in all respects superior to the First, and introduced into the world in a more extraordinary manner? There is in every view a remarkable relation subsisting between them, and, on account of the striking contrast of their characters, Adam is termed by the Apostle, the *figure of the Messiah*. As corruption was derived from the former to all mankind, in consequence of his transgression; so a purity of nature is conveyed to us by the latter, by virtue of his unfinning righteousness. *For, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.*

After the First Covenant, which was ground-
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ed on the unrelenting Justice of God, was evacuated and discharged, it retired to make way for the proper introduction, and more friendly operation, of a SECOND originating in his paternal and unbounded Mercy. By this, he vouchsafes "To pardon the sins of
"men original and actual, to assist their im-
"perfect endeavours by his sacred influence,
"to accept them if sincere, and to crown them
"with immortal happiness, through the me-
"ritorious obedience and oblation of his
"Son:" And he requires of them "Faith in
"that Son, dependence on his merits, Obedi-
"ence to his laws, and Repentance of their
"sins." Thus hath he sent redemption to his
people. He hath commanded his Covenant for
ever. Holy and Reverend is his Name.

The First was the *Covenant of Works*. Its condition was rigorous and severe, demanding an obedience adequate to the law of heaven, to be performed by the inherent ability of man, without failure or imperfection, and without admitting the benefit of repentance. *Cursed is he that continueth not in all the things of the law, to do them.* The Second is the COVENANT OF GRACE, by which the Saviour confers

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confers the reward of immortality procured by virtue of his own righteousness, as a *free gift*, only subjecting us to such mild and easy terms, as he hath enjoined in the Gospel; the observance of which is, however, indispensable to secure his title, as well as to qualify us for its enjoyment. Till the First met with its full and regular completion, 'tis impossible it should be annulled or superseded, for the God of heaven is immutable and eternal, and his decrees are never to be reversed. Christ, therefore, tells his disciples, that he came not to destroy, but to fulfil, the Law, which may be understood, with full propriety, of the Law given to Adam. Lo! I come to do thy will, O God! By doing the will of God, he fulfilled his law, or the Covenant of Works, which was immediately succeeded by that of Grace. Thus he taketh away the First, that he may establish the Second, and it remains that mankind are under the benign influence of Grace, to be saved by the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Wherefore, my brethren, ye are now dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth
fruit

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fruit unto God, by performing the Condition of his gracious Covenant.

So redundantly was satisfaction rendered to the throne of heaven by our Saviour's meritorious exertions, that it exceeds the primitive offence, on account of the superior worth and dignity of Him that made it. It not only cancels the original corruption entailed on our nature, but extends to all the actual sins of men, healing and redeeming all, and leads, through the avenue of Grace, to a most sublime and inestimable reward. Not as the offence, saith St. Paul, so also is the free gift: for, if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the Grace of God and the gift by Grace hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for this judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences to justification. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one: much more they which receive abundance of Grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. Such is the resplendent view of the ample and enlarged foundation, together with the benign and extensive genius, of the Second Covenant erect-

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ed on the perfect obedience of the Son of God,

IMMEDIATELY on the violation of the original Covenant by the father of mankind, this of Grace commenced in its uses and effects, though its formal execution was postponed, by supreme appointment, till the death of Christ; and the effects of the sin of Adam were removed from all his posterity, by the meritorious efforts and oblation of *the Lamb, which was slain, in the divine decree, from the foundation of the world.* How amazing the operations of the providence of God in the salvation of man! Surely, he could deem it no hardship to suffer by the misconduct of the First Adam, since the remedy was immediately administered in the Second, and had been projected in the heavenly councils before the ages; for *God hath redeemed us with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot, fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but manifest in these last times.* The universal Covenant, whose sacred influence extended and extends over all the race of Adam, is that of Grace; and whoever lived in obedience to the law

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of heaven, in whatever age, under whatever dispensation, however it was discovered to them, or in whatever degree, were partakers of its benefits, and will be entitled to its blessings. Obedience to the Law of Nature or to any other Law dictated by heaven, wherever that of the Gospel was not announced, will have a reference to the merits and death of Christ, who *is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, and will derive a reward not from the Justice, but from the Mercy, of God.

The *Promise* of this great Redeemer was specially vouchsafed to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the Ancient Jews, accompanied by a particular dispensation to these last in-joining a number of sacrifices and observances, which had in themselves no intrinsic value, only as they anticipated and presignified the sacrifice of Christ. By an unshaken faith and reliance on this Promise, together with obedience to the Law of God moral and ritual, the blood of this immortal sacrifice, which was not shed till more than 4000 years from the creation, flowed back to heal the infirmities of every age. *For this cause, saith Saint Paul, he is the mediator of the new testament,*

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ment, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they, which are called, might receive the promise of eternal life.

And it is every way consistent with the nature of God, who is the merciful Father of all men, to presume, that, however it hath pleased his providence to exclude the Heathens of every age from the light of the Gospel, they will find a saving interest in the death of Christ, provided they have walked after that light, which shone in their hearts, though inferior and less resplendent. They were involved in the misfortune of the first Adam, and why should they be prohibited the benefits of the second? What, because *they did not believe in him, of whom they had not heard?* No such thing: The influence of Redemption by the one is, surely, as extensive as the effect of the other's Transgression; and since the Promise was given to Adam, and in him to all his posterity, they have as fair a right to claim under it, as the Jews, or as the Christians. We have the warrant of the infallible oracles to assure us, that *there is none other name under heaven given unto men, by*

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which they can be saved, but the name of Jesus only; and can we suppose, that, by depriving them of its salvation, merely because they had no opportunity of believing and obeying the Gospel, an imputation of the deepest stain should be left to dishonour the Mercy and the Justice of heaven? No: The righteous judgment of God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God; for as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the mean while, accusing or else excusing one another. There was a Saviour
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of the world before it existed, whose merits are available to all the sons of men, how many soever, in their generations, might have been *under the cloud* of ignorance; as many have been unacquainted of the offence of Adam, whose effects they have, nevertheless, experienced. *In every nation, he that feareth God and doeth righteousness*, as far as his knowledge and abilities extend, *will be accepted of him.*

What advantage, then, had the Jew, or what profit of circumcision—and what advantage hath the Christian, or what profit of baptism, if the Heathen is intitled to the same religious benefits?—An inspired Apostle has supplied the answer, Much every way; chiefly, because to them are committed the oracles of God. For, since salvation by Jesus Christ is not absolute and unconditional, excluding the endeavours and exertions of men, but ultimately and in effect depending upon them, they, to whom the will of God is most clearly discovered, to whom the scope of their obedience and the object of their worship are most obviously displayed, to whom the way of heaven is most distinctly marked out, and to whom the final reward is
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most fully ascertained, have the greatest ability, as well as the most powerful inducements, to aid them in running the race of immortality and glory. The benighted Heathen had only the dim torch of nature to direct his steps, and that subject to be darkened by the prejudices of men and *the rudiments of the world*, whilst the motives to his duty were weak and dubious. And though the Jew enjoyed the advantage of a special intercourse with heaven, yet was his knowledge of spiritual subjects imperfect and obscure. His duty and his worship consisted, greatly, in rites and ceremonial observances, whose scope and meaning he did not fully comprehend; and his rewards he understood to be chiefly temporary. But the Son of God brought with him the light from heaven, which illuminated the darkened eye, and pierced the benighted bosom. With an exact and unerring finger he marked out the road to happiness and life. *He was the light of the world*, under whose resplendent ray the Christian may rejoice to walk. Not only the amazing system of his redemption is unfolded by a train of sublimest doctrines, and the ways of the

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the heavenly councils laid open to his view by express revelation, but every minute branch of his duty is explained in precise terms and enforced by the most sovereign authority, whilst the exalted end to which he aspires stands full in view. Significantly, therefore, is the Heathen described as *sitting in the darkness of the shadow of death*, the Jew as enjoying a *light shining in a dark place*, and the Christian as possessed of *the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ*.

By these superior advantages which the wisdom of the Supreme hath reserved in store, *to be a light unto his feet and a lantern to his paths*, the Christian cannot fail, if he will exert himself, to speed his way to the illustrious end of his high profession, and, if there be many different degrees of felicity in the celestial abode, to secure the possession of the higher mansions. But, while he glories in the eminence which he holds in the scale of intelligent and enlightened mortals, let him awfully reflect, that, in proportion to the advantages he enjoys above the poor deserted Heathen, *of so much sorer punishment he shall be thought worthy*, if he neglect to improve, or
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venture to abuse, them. And, with humble and cautious reverence, let him read, in that sacred volume which is the repository of all his high and sanguine hopes, this peremptory and decisive sentence, *It had been better for him, not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after he has known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto him.*

“Far from envying the heathen world the advantages they receive from the law of reason under which they live, let us bless God for his impartial overflowing goodness to all men; let us even rejoice for the benefits treasured up for them in a gracious dispensation, of which at present, they unhappily know nothing; and let us only acknowledge with especial gratitude the higher blessings vouchsafed on us, who are called to serve God in the Gospel of his Son.”

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PART II.

TO re-instate fallen man in the happiness which was lost, and to restore him to his original perfection, is the ultimate end of the Covenant of Grace. The parties concerned are God and Man, and Christ is the agent negotiating between them, who in the Scriptures is expressly stiled, the *Mediator of the New Covenant*. The immense distance between God and us, widened by the pollution of our sins, renders an immediate intercourse with him impossible. It was, therefore, requisite, in the work of man's redemption, that a third person of higher dignity and more sublime perfection should interpose in his behalf; and who should this person be, but he, who partook of the nature of both parties, and who laid the foundation of the Covenant

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itself

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itself in his own obedience? We are accordingly, assured, that, *as there is one God, so there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.*

The high Office of this superior Personage divides into three great and illustrious branches, the execution of which constitutes the august system of the religion of Jesus.—During the period of his incarnation, as Mediator from God to Man, he unfolded the unsearchable councils of the Divine Will, explained the tenor of the New Covenant, illustrated its conditions, and enforced its laws.—As Mediator from us to God, he made atonement for our sins, taking the punishment of them upon himself, and devolving his merits upon us.—As Mediator from God to us, he blesses, he sanctifies, he protects, us, in this life, and will raise us incorruptible from the grave, to instate us in his future eternal kingdom. Thus, he is our PROPHET to teach us, our PRIEST to atone for us, and our KING to protect, and to reign over us. To these three exalted functions he was commissioned by the Father of the universe, *who hath made that same Jesus, who healed us by his righteousness, both*
Lord

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Lord and CHRIST, by which appellation we know that he is invested in all these offices, its interpretation being *AN OINTEN*, and anointing with oil being the emblematic form of conferring these several dignities,

I. BESIDE the high and supernatural commission of predicting future events, the holy function of a *PROPHET* is to *teach* and to *instruct*. As, in consequence of the primeval offence, men lost the power of obeying the decrees of heaven, so were their understandings darkened that they could not sufficiently discover them. It was, therefore, necessary that the Son of God should become the Son of man, in order to communicate to the world the light from above, and to inform his earthly brethren of the full and perfect will of his heavenly Father. For this important purpose he tells his disciples, that all things are delivered to him of his Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal them. I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. I am the living bread which came down from

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heaven;

heaven ; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever. And the bread which I give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day : For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He, that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. In what august and majestic language does the Saviour represent the vast importance of his Doctrines and Precepts ! He calls them the *bread* of our spiritual and eternal life ; and that bread he dignifies by the sublime and mystic figure of his *body* and *blood*.

To expound to men the grounds and principles of Redemption through the Covenant of Grace, to lay open the *new way* to eternal life, which he purchased for them, and to unfold the great scheme of his Religion, was the immediate subject of his doctrine. He displayed that illustrious series of truths by which their salvation was brought to a successful issue, acquainting them of the first and meritorious part which he himself sustained ; but he was more full and precise in inculcating the secondary and subordinate part, which

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which rests incumbent on them, and indispensibly incumbent, without the execution of which all his exertions will prove useless and ineffectual, his gracious intercession will be abortive, and they will forfeit the reward of immortality and glory. This is the Condition imposed on man, which branches into three general and cardinal divisions—*Faith*, *Obedience*, and *Repentance*. These are the terms on which Pardon and Salvation are to be obtained. They are inculcated and enforced in every page of the sacred writers, and, though the Saviour hath procured redemption for all without exception, yet can none be entitled to it but they, who, after these terms have been fairly propounded to them, perform them in a sincere conscience and with an upright heart. To aid us in the discharge of these duties, he hath subjoined the promise of the assistance of *Grace*, together with particular directions how to render a holy *Worship* pure and acceptable to God, by sending up our prayers and praises as an incense well-pleasing to him. He hath super-added the institution of *Baptism*, by which we are initiated into the privileges of his redemption

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redemption, with the correspondent one of the Eucharist, in which these privileges are confirmed; and the sanctions, by which his religion is sealed, are Rewards and Punishments in the last degree transcendent. *The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, because the Lord anointed him to preach good tidings unto the meek; he sent him to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.—For all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the praise of thy children.*

This revelation our great Prophet delivered to men, partly by his own familiar intercourse, but fully or however sufficiently by the Holy Ghost, whom, after his departure, he sent down from heaven. The amazing and extensive scheme of Religion was not opened to view at one instant, but was gradually and imperfectly disclosed through a series of ages. The unravelling of the Gospel dispensation, for wisest and most important reasons,

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reasons, was slow and progressive, advancing to its consummation by just degrees, in imitation of a vernal bud, which, small and contracted at first, unfolds in order, and hastens through several stages to its full maturity. The supernatural light destined to illumine the Christian hemisphere resembles that which every day enlightens the natural. At first, it dawned from far over the Partiarthal and Jewish communities, and shed a glimmering twilight through part of the eastern world. By the combined illumination of the Prophetic system, it gradually increased, till the approach of the Baptist, like the harbinger of day, *as a burning and a shining light*, announced the presence of the *Sun of Righteousness*, and prepared the world for his reception. When He arose, the long-expected messenger from above, he by no means unveiled himself in an unclouded emanation of light, but opened his commission with prudent care, drawing a veil over his native glory, lest, by too strong and sudden a refulgence, it should dazzle and disqualify the eyes of men, before they were strengthened and prepared. He laid firmly the foundation of his religion in
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the disguise of meanness and humility, and left the splendid superstructure to be finished by his Apostles under the special influence and direction of his infallible Spirit. Then was the high-day of Christianity suffered to shine out in its meridian splendour, being supported in its career by signs on earth and signs in heaven.

II. BUT the most illustrious and essential part of the mediatorial Office of Christ is the Sacrifice of himself. Before the salvation of men could be accomplished in any of its periods, their sins, the consequential effect of the primitive fault, were to be discharged, and it was impossible that an universal pardon could issue from the hallowed tribunal of heaven, till they had received their merited punishment; *for without shedding of blood there is no remission.* By his sufferings and death the Saviour of the world made atonement and satisfaction to the offended Deity for all the sins of men original and actual, being a merciful and faithful HIGH PRIEST *in things pertaining unto God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* For the sake
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of the dignity and divinity of Him that made it, this atonement was accepted, and considered as equivalent to the guilt, and adequate to the punishment, of all the world. *Christ hath suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God**. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed†. He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him‡. He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us††, that he might reconcile us unto God.

The Sacrifice of Christ put a finishing hand to the work of redemption, by giving efficacy and operation to every other part of the heavenly-concerted scheme. His spotless life, and unflinching Obedience crowned by the voluntary effusion of his blood, and the imperfect endeavours of men, receive their use and importance from it; for, till sin was abolished, their application was in vain. Afterwards, his righteousness could be imputed to

* 1 Pet. iii. 18. † Isaiah liii. 5.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. †† Gal. iii. 13

men, and their sincere, though defective, exertions could be accepted in its room, because satisfaction was made for all the infirmities of their nature. Thus was the breach closed between God and Man, and reconciliation made, and the rigorous condition of the First Covenant was changed into the mild and gracious terms of the Second. Here we view the connexion between the *Obedience*, and the *Death*, of Christ. He *obeyed* the will of God in the room of men, and he *died* to place their imperfect endeavours in the room of his perfect obedience; and the consequence which results, is this, By performing the commands of the Gospel as well as we can, we shall be re-instated in the divine favor, through his meritorious life, and, if possible, more meritorious death, and shall be entitled to the reward of immortality in happiness, as if human nature had not departed from its native exalted innocence. Significantly, therefore, exclaimed our Lord, as he expired upon the cross, *It is finished*. What was finished?—The most illustrious, and the most beneficent work of God; a work, which the wisdom of Omniscience could only devise, and which

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the righteousness of Omnipotence could only execute ; a work that eclipses the glory of his Creation ; a work which applauding angels view with transport—The Redemption of fallen man.

And not only the great and more essential parts of the immortal plan were finished by the death of Christ, but every secondary and subordinate part, which served to the introduction and execution of it. Now the mystery was unsealed, which was hidden from the foundation of the world. The illustrious train of prophecies which respected Christ's first coming, and which shone with increasing and reflected light through many generations, converged to this single point, and met their precise completion in this event. Now were types and symbolic prefigurations lost in the real things they had shadowed and represented. The more private contrivance of the Jewish œconomy was now totally evolved, and the ritual Law, with its pompous exhibition of ceremonies, was entirely rescinded. The Levitical Priest resigned for ever his ensigns and oblations. The great annual Sacrifice of the Passover which was first slain without the sanctuary, and the High

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Priest, who entered alone with the blood of it into the Most Holy Place, to offer it before the Lord for the sins of all the people, now found their meaning and end in an everlasting Sacrifice, and in an *unchangeable Priesthood*. *Christ the Lamb of God, by the sacrifice of himself ONCE made here on earth, atoned for the sins of the whole world; and, as the HIGH PRIEST of our profession, who is not made after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life, with his own blood entered in ONCE into heaven, (the true Holy Place) having obtained eternal redemption, there to appear in the presence of God for us. For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer sacrifices for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once when he offered up himself, who is consecrated for evermore. Having, then, offered ONE sacrifice for sin, he sat down for ever at the right hand of God; and, being made perfect through sufferings, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, called of God, A High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec.*

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And since Christ is the end and consummation of all the religious dispensations of heaven, no other terms of salvation will ever be offered, but we are *perfect and complete in him*. There remains no more sacrifice for sin. In his death all the divine councils are shut up, and man must stand or fall by this final and unchangeable decree. Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the Holiest (into the abode of happiness and immortality) by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated to us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having a High Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful who promised, and let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works.

III. AFTER the death of Christ the cloud dispersed, through which his love for men shone so resurgent in that gloomy hour, and his glory began immediately to display itself in all its native lustre. To heighten his dying agonies,

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agonies, to give every pain of death a double sting, his malignant executioners added every instrument of shame that triumphant malevolence could suggest. They derided, they insulted, they reviled, him ; and among the vilest of indignities with which he was loaden, they invested him in mock pageantry with all the ensigns of royalty, a scarlet robe, a crown upon his head, and a sceptre in his hand, saluting him in derision, *Hail King of the Jews !* To this amazing scene of studied cruelty they added a superb inscription, over his head, blazoned in the characters of three different languages, J E S U S O F N A Z A R E T H K I N G O F T H E J E W S. Much he pitied, much he prayed, much he forgave. After suffering the most excruciating torments human nature can undergo, after withstanding the heaviest calumny malicious imagination could supply, with patience, with composure, with resignation, without one expression of complaint, in profound submission to the God of heaven, *He bowed his head and gave up the ghost.* Alas ! little did their foolish hearts imagine, that they were enthroning him in a kingdom as much
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above all the kingdoms of the world, as the heaven is higher than the earth. Little did they dream, that the crown of thorns was infinitely more glorious than the most brilliant diadem, and that the humble reed was converted into a sceptre of righteousness to rule the nations. Little did they suspect, that, by their impious inscription they were proclaiming to men and angels, *The Lord is KING*, that the people should bow the knee before him, and that *the kings of the earth should bring their glory and honour unto him!* For, to this end Christ both died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living, who is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God, all authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Being invested here on earth, by the hands of men, with the ensigns of his regal character, he ascended to re-assume the honours of his native kingdom, and to exercise his power. From his celestial throne he rules and protects his church militant on earth, with visible and invisible sway. He aids it by his counsel, and enlightens it by his Spirit. And after it has conquered in his world, under the

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the glorious banner of the cross on which he died, and obtained the crown of eternal life, the prize of its high calling in the next, he is appointed to reign over it in triumph from everlasting to everlasting. I saw, and behold, says the prophet Daniel, one like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, and he came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom which shall not pass away, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed.—The Lord thy God, O Sion! shall be KING for evermore, and throughout all generations.

FROM the contemplation of these three exalted Offices, we may acknowledge the expediency of the incarnation of the Son of God. In his Prophetic function, he was God to deliver his doctrines and precepts with authority, and Man to impart them to men. In his Priestly office, he was Man to render him capable to suffer and to intercede for men, and God to give merit to his death, and prevalence to his intercession. In his Kingly capacity, he was God to govern, and
Man

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Man to teach us to obey ; God to conquer our spiritual adversary, and Man to encourage us by his example to conquer, and to die. Wherefore, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.

SINCE, then, through the Mercy of our God, we have obtained so great a deliverer, whose name is *Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace*, let us rejoice at the day that we were born, and at the hour in which we were baptized. Let the first object of our lives be, to learn the substance of his law, and the second, to perform the duties, which it enjoins ; for in vain shall we claim the merits of a Saviour, unless we obey the law of a Saviour. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For, as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and the garden causeth the things that are sown to spring up ; so the Lord hath caused righteousness*

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and praise to spring forth before all nations.

WITH hearts full of sublimest gratitude, inspired with triumphant exultation, and overflowing with reverential joy, let us make a solemn retrospective pause to contemplate the benign nature of the *Second Covenant*, and the glorious advantages which it confers above the *First*. It is constructed on milder terms; it imparts divine assistance; it is invested with richer promises. First, it is founded on the perfect Obedience of Christ, which is accepted in the room of that of men; it substitutes the virtue of Faith joined to our imperfect Endeavours and Repentance, in the place of his perfect Obedience; and it dispenses a complete pardon of all our sins, through the inestimable Sacrifice of his death. Secondly, it enlightens the benighted mind, and assists the infirmities of men in the performance of their duty. And, lastly, it crowns their imperfect services with the inheritance of angels, with happiness, glory, and immortality in heaven, which is more than was promised to Adam, and which was reserved to honour the intercession of the Son
of

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God. By the intervention of this gracious Covenant, all those natural perfections as well as supernatural graces, which were effaced in Adam, will be restored in Christ. The divine image will be re-impressed upon our souls, whilst our bodies will be formed of an ethereal and sublime contexture. We shall be *perfect as God is perfect*, and happy as he is happy, and shall be re-admitted to the fruition of Him, in his celestial abode, in whom all happiness and perfection are combined.

Under what a gloom of horror and desperation does man enter upon the stage of life ! With what a glorious prospect does the Christian depart ! How greatly does the contrast of danger and delivery heighten the grandeur and solemnity of the religious scene ? As both the splendour of the sun, and the beauties of surrounding nature are redoubled upon him, who emerges out of the darkest cell into the brightest day ; so, in the catastrophe of the Christian Redemption, the sublimest happiness issuing out of the most palpable misery, displays the wisdom, the power, the glory, of God, in the most adorable light. It makes us *able to comprehend*

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with all Saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. "O happy fault, exclaims a venerable Saint, which, by the wife and merciful counsel of God, was repaired in a way so advantageous, that the salvation of the earth is the wonder of heaven, and the redemption of man the joy of angels." Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth hath flourished out of the earth, and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.

Such is the joyful issue of the intercession of CHRIST, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and, being fashioned as a man, he humbled himself and became subject unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion; and hath given him a name that is above every name, not only in this world, but in that which is to come, that at the name JESUS every
knee

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knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

PRAISE the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name ! Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth thee all thy sins and healeth all thine infirmities, who saveth thy life from destruction and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON the EVIDENCES of the CHRISTIAN
RELIGION, and the AUTHORITY of
the SCRIPTURES.

HEBREWS ii. 3, 4.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect such great
salvation, which, at first, began to be spoken
by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by
them that heard him, God also bearing them
witness both with signs, and wonders, and
divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,
according to his own will.*

HAVING had a concise survey of the
substance and œconomy of that amaz-
ing dispensation, by which the Son of God
became the Saviour of the world, before we
prosecute this immortal argument, it may be
proper to contemplate the medium by which
these exalted truths are conveyed to the
know-

DISCOURSE IV. 87

knowledge, and ascertained to the conviction, of men.

The plan of Redemption exhibited in the preceding pages, lies removed out of the sphere of natural reason to investigate or discover, and was communicated to the world by the special REVELATION, and particular intervention, of heaven. In the first discourse we made an attempt to draw the line between Reason and Revelation, and to illustrate their connexion, observing how the latter was indebted to the former for its *internal* and fundamental evidence. Let us, now, endeavour to dive more particularly into the foundation of our faith—by canvassing and arranging its *external* decisive EVIDENCES—and by a sober inquiry into the AUTHENTICITY of the Books in which they are contained, and into the CREDIBILITY of the Writers. However the objects of Revelation may soar above the scrutiny of the human intellect, it must itself be accompanied with such credentials as make their application to reason and common sense, in order to exercise the judgment, and to challenge the assent, of reasonable men.

FROM

FROM the discoveries he hath made to their natural reason, we may infer the possibility that the Almighty could give men farther intimations of his will; and, since the light of reason is found to be an insufficient guide, his paternal goodness induces the probability that he should. Who can entertain a doubt that He, who made, and *who knows what is in, man,* can reveal himself to him in a variety of modes? Though, as a Spirit, he be incapable of being the object of mortal eye; yet cannot He, who made the eye and all it sees, assume an appearance, so as to convince it of his more immediate presence, and more particular power? Cannot He, who formed the tongue, communicate his will by the instrument of human language? Or, cannot He, who framed the mind, impart himself to it by an immediate and peculiar impression? Could not the Son of God, *by whom the worlds were made,* cloath himself with human flesh and converse familiarly with his earthly brethren, instructing them in the will of his Father, and in the way to heaven?

Do you believe in God?—You must consequently

sequently believe, that he can reveal himself to men. Look into the Bible. A Revelation is there produced; and it only remains to inquire, whether it be *true*, that is, whether it came from him. The method to determine this important point, is, to examine whether those men, by whom it was dispensed, had their commission sealed by such supernatural powers, as can only proceed from Him, who is the Maker and Lord of all—FORETELLING THINGS TO COME, and WORKING OF MIRACLES. These are God's *Seal* and *Witness*, the infallible credentials of a divine commission. For who can disclose events which are hidden in the womb of futurity, but He alone, to whom the past and the future are always present, *to whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years*, whose all-seeing eye penetrates through the regions of eternity, and who *calls those things which be not, as though they were*? Or, who can interrupt the established order of things by suspending the laws of nature, but the God of nature? Whoever, therefore, in any age, was distinguished by these extraordinary powers, was God's *Servant* or *Prophet*

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pecially appointed ; and we are bound to believe and to obey the revelation made by him, or we shall incur the guilt of infidelity and rebellion against God ; for, as it is impossible for him to lie, or to delude his creatures, he is incapable of putting his seal to a falsehood or imposture. This is the witness of God, and whilst we believe many things on the strength of our own shallow understandings, or on the fallible credit of others, shall we not rely on his infallible authority ? *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.*

On this principle let us submit Revelation, in all its parts, to the sober cognizance of reason. You, who feel yourselves interested in the cause of immortality, take your Bible in hand and examine every page. Be candid, be honest, be sincere. Divest yourselves of passion, of prejudice, of partiality. If, upon virtuous and mature inquiry, you find it destitute of this foundation, do not believe it. But, if it has this supernatural evidence, rest assured that it came from God, and that the religion which it contains is holy and divine. Presume not, therefore, to affront him by an
obsti-

DISCOURSE IV. 91

obstinate infidelity, for *he that believeth not, hath made him a liar, because he hath not believed the record which God gave of his Son.* Be persuaded by them who have already made the inquiry, that you will certainly discover the abundant power of God unto salvation. But do not rest on their assurance, Examine for yourselves, and you will be convinced, that God hath confirmed the truth of the Christian Religion by setting in the church, *first Apostles, secondly Prophets, after that Miracles, This is the witness which he hath testified of his Son. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

IMMEDIATELY after the lapse of the original Parents, the sacred story informs us, how God gave them the Promise of a Redeemer in that memorable sentence, *The woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head;* and the principal business of the Old Testament, in its succeeding annals, is to display the long and illustrious series of preparation arranged by the hand of Providence to accomplish this event in the incarnation of his Son. Almost 1800 years from the creation all the world was destroyed except one family,

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family, to which the Promise was renewed ; and, after some generations, it was more particularly vouchsafed to Abraham, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* In process of time, a particular people was favoured with an intermediate dispensation, which was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. Sin and idolatry had so poisoned the world, that it was requisite a select nation should be appointed to preserve a pure sense of religion in a corner of the earth, from whence, when *the Sun of Righteousness* arose, he might dispense his *healing beams* through all the world. They had the Ten Commandments given to direct their moral conduct, and the Ritual œconomy was added to adumbrate the Messiah. Their history became a sacred repository to preserve the divine decrees, to display the consistency and continuity of the grand prophetic system, and to exhibit the credentials of a more extensive dispensation, which was finally to redound to the use of all men. Such is the relation subsisting between the Jewish and Christian institutions ; the first was only a prelude

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prelude to the latter, and is fitly termed a *Schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ*. How amazing to contemplate the origin, progress, and various evolutions of our holy religion, commencing from the foundation of the world, and unfolding itself by regular degrees, till it came to its maturity and consummation in the advent of Jesus!

This is a brief account of the principal memoirs of the Old Testament, where we find the Promise confirmed in every age by supernatural Evidences, and by the positive testimony of heaven. It was probably made to Adam before God withdrew his more immediate intercourse, so that our primitive father left his earthly Paradise not without the comfortable assurance of being translated to a heavenly kingdom. It was renewed to Noah and Abraham with such certain marks of a divine interposition, as put its truth beyond the shadow of a doubt; and the faith of the latter stands upon record as the sublimest effort of piety, resignation, and unshaken trust. Its infallibility was established in every succeeding age by conspicuous exertions of almighty power; sometimes, by a supernatural inter-

intercourse with particular persons, at others, by a visible exhibition of the glory of God to the whole assembly of the peculiar people. To these general notices of a superior agency we may add the innumerable TYPES circumstantially adumbrating the illustrious person, in whom the Promise centred. If Joshua led the children of Israel into the fruitful land of Canaan, he was a Type of Jesus, and the land was a shadow of a heavenly country. If the Paschal lamb was slain to atone for the people, it was to represent the death of Him who was to cancel the sins of men. If the brazen serpent was lifted up to heal the people, it was to pre-signify the elevation of Christ upon the cross, from whence his blood was to flow to heal the nations. The magnificent train of PROPHECIES also relating to the Messiah, which were predicted from age to age and recorded in the public annals, and which were in part fulfilled in every generation, confirmed the integrity of the divine decrees. Supported by this body of supernatural evidence countless numbers of ancient Jews reposed the firmest confidence in the Promise, and partook of the benefits of the Christ.

Christian dispensation ; and, at the actual appearance of the personage predicted, a full EXPECTATION of him prevailed throughout the nation. When the Baptist appeared, the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not *. He was particularly interrogated, *Art thou that Prophet ?* Anna the prophetess spoke of Jesus to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem †. And Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel ††.

AND if these illustrious men of old, who only beheld his glory through a confused and extended medium, as a *light shining in a dark place*, believed in the Messiah so long before his actual approach, we, who have had the *light from heaven dwelling among us* confirmed both by God and that light itself, cannot surely want evidence to establish our faith. What they had only by promise, we have in enjoyment, for God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last

* Luke iii. 15. † John i. 21.

† Luke ii. 38. †† Luke ii. 25.

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days, spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. All the evidence which they enjoyed brings down its weight to us in their authentic and well-attested records; and we have a cloud of other witnesses of later date and more indubitable certainty, transmitted to us by the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, and by the history of the Church. How, then, shall we escape, if we neglect such great salvation, which, at first began to be spoken by the Lord himself, and was, afterwards confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Even the writings of Moses and the Prophets afford clearer evidence to us, than they did to the ancient Jews. The TYPICAL representations of the Messiah could but feebly operate before his appearance; whereas they prove indubitably to us, by their exact correspondence, that Christ is he. The PROPHECIES were not fulfilled in their days, in their great and ultimate sense. They knew, indeed, from their completion in an inferior sense
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and from other supernatural tests, that they were predicted by men divinely inspired; they justly ascribed them to the person of a future deliverer, in whom, they believed, they would have their full and decisive solution, but were ignorant of their exact coincidence and particular meaning. Christ was the determined point in which they all centred. They alluded to the manner of his appearance, to his person, to his actions, to the time, place, and particulars of his birth, life, death and resurrection, and to the nature of his kingdom. In him alone they found their exact and particular interpretation, and indubitably prove to all future ages, that Jesus of Nazareth was that great Redeemer promised to Adam, Noah, and Abraham. So invincible is the argument derived from ancient Prophecy to the Christian cause; for when “a variety of future events, inscrutable to human sagacity and respecting one person, have been, by different men and at different times, predicted, and these events have individually come to pass in one person, and in no other; the prediction of these events was divinely inspired, and he that claims under

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them to be the Messiah or person foretold, hath his claims confirmed by the highest authority, that of God himself."

The testimony of Jesus was the ultimate object of *the spirit of Prophecy*, and its august system, which was destined to announce and to dignify his appearance, and to remain a standing evidence of the divinity of his religion, discovers something in its œconomy of such amazing variety and extent, yet so wonderfully harmonious and consistent, as to carry an inherent proof that it was conducted under the special cognizance of Him, who delights in variety and order, and employs the actions of men and the elements of the world to execute his secret and determined purpose. We find the predictions of the Old Testament to be very numerous, to have been delivered in very different and distant ages, and many of them to be defined with a circumstantial minuteness. The persons, from whose mouths they came, are also numerous, and stand free of all suspicion of concert or collusion; for so far from being privy to each others predictions, they appear unacquainted with the particular meaning of their own, which could only be interpreted

interpreted by the events. Nevertheless, upon an accurate comparison all the Prophecies are found exactly to harmonize and accord into one uniform, consistent, and admirable plan. They were all dispensed in the history of one nation, they looked for their completion in one regular series of things, and ultimately pointed to one extraordinary person. Preceding prophecies paved the way for those that follow, whilst the following reflected back a light to facilitate the interpretation of the preceding, and every one, whose event laid in that portion of time which is already past, has met with a just and evident solution. They generally comprehended a *double sense*; one present and almost at hand; the other future and remote. One alluded to the polity of the theocratic government of the Jews, to whose administration Prophecy was peculiarly instrumental; the other precluded to the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Under the *civil* predictions the *spiritual* were covered, but the latter was the important object of the Inspirer, and the completion of the civil was designed to induce the expectation, and to secure the credit, of the spiritual. Nay,

Prophecy is of *threefold* interpretation, for with the predictions concerning the *first* coming of Christ, that is, those which related to his personal appearance, his character, and his office, were interwoven those of his *second* coming, which prognosticated the fate and fortunes of his kingdom ; and the completion of those afforded, in their turn, a sanction of the truth of these. So various and extensive, so ingenuous and unsuspected, so circumstantial and precise, so uniform and connected, are the method and oeconomy of the scheme of Prophecy. One ultimate purpose pervades the whole. This was barely announced by the most ancient prophets, and was gradually unfolded from age to age, by a successive series of predictions, till it was sufficiently disclosed ; then the spirit of prophecy became dumb, and remained so for many ages, till it revived in the forerunner of Him, who was the object in contemplation, and on whose person and dispensation it was appointed to attend. " Is it credible (to use the words of a very learned and elegant Divine) that this perennial fount of prophecy, which ran so copiously from Adam to Christ, and watered
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all the ages of the Jewish church, should stop at once in so critical a season ; if fortune, or fraud, or fanaticism had dispensed its streams ; if any thing, indeed, but the hand of God, had opened its source and directed its current ? ”

Beside this amazing *dependence* and *concatenation* of the system of prophecy, its *language* seemed to contradict itself. It represented the Messiah in the opposite characters of a sovereign Prince, and a suffering destitute. It foretold, that he should spring from the meanest parentage and establish an unfading empire, subduing the world to his sway by no other weapons than humility and peace ; and that, at the same time, he should be despised and persecuted of all men, and ignominiously put to death. Though he was to be a *man of sorrows* and *acquainted with grief* ; yet were *gentiles to come to his light*, and *kings to the brightness of his rising*. All these enigmas, and many more, were perfectly evolved, all these apparent contradictions were clearly reconciled, in the person and kingdom of Christ.

The Apostles reasoned with the Jews from the topic of the ancient Prophecies, and Jesus appealed

appealed to them himself in witness of his mission. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me; and beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded the things concerning himself.*

BUT the Saviour of the world had no occasion to appeal to the Prophets, or to call in witness from afar. In his own person was his divine commission sealed. *The Works, says he, which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* Whilst Prophecies are addressed to the learned and contemplative, the MIRACLES recorded in the New Testament are levelled at the commonest capacities, and carry with them the most obvious and palpable conviction. As you read the sacred story, you behold cripples from the womb, by a word or touch, leaving their infirmities behind them, and leaping forth in exultation and holy triumph. In a moment, every species of disease confessed the Lord of life and health. The winds and the waves obeyed their master; the earth and the air
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submitted to his control. And as his especial business was to extirpate the works of the Devil, how signally did he exert his authority over him, by ejecting him from the possession of numerous wretches, and by obliging him to attest his authority and to confess his power. *We know thee who thou art, Jesus the Son of God.* He gave speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick, life to the dead, and enlargement to those who were held in bondage of the devil. Well might Nicodemus exclaim, *No man can do the works that thou doest, except God be with him!*

And, since the virtues of his life shone with unfulfilled lustre; since his Doctrines coincide with our sublimest ideas of the divine attributes; since his Precepts excel every effort of reason, and eclipse every portrait of virtue that ever was depicted; since he had no other view than the benefit of men and the glory of God,—these circumstances preclude every sinister supposition, that his Miracles were derived from any other source than the Author of good. This open appeal he made to the purity of his life, *Which of you convinceth*

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me of sin ; and if I speak the truth, why will ye not believe ?

Such were the miraculous powers exercised by Christ and his Apostles ; and, that their use and intent were to seal his doctrines, and to attest his mission, we have the joint conviction of their own declaration, of the nature of the works themselves, of their fitness for the purpose, of the effects which they produced, and of the express testimony of the God of heaven:

By his own PREDICTIONS our Saviour added a further evidence of his divinity. He foretold that *Judas should betray him* * ; that he would be crucified at *Jerusalem* by the *Gentiles* † ; that his other *Apostles* would forsake him ‡ ; and *Peter deny him thrice* †† ; and that he would rise again the third day ‖. All these prophecies were delivered and circumstantially fulfilled for the express purpose of confirming his mission : And now I tell you before it come to pass ; that, when it is come, ye may remember that I am he. He was

* Mat. xxvi. 25. † Mat. xxvi. 31.

‡ Mat. xx. 18, 19. †† Mat. xxvi. 34. ‖ Mat. xx. 19.

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circumstantial in anticipating the demolition of the Temple *, and the destruction of Jerusalem with the extraordinary manner of it †, in prognosticating the distress of the times ‡, the dispersion of the Jews, and the conversion of the Gentiles §§, together with the fate and fortunes of his church. *These things*, says he, *have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.*

At this time, the fount of Prophecy, which had ceased to flow for a considerable period, broke out afresh to water all the future ages of the church. That part of the grand prophetic scheme, which relates to Christ's second coming, and which unfolds the revolutions and various success of the kingdom of the Gospel to the end of the world, was, indeed, opened by the ancient Prophets, but was resumed by him, and finished by his Apostles. So that prophecy is calculated by superior wisdom, to travel with our holy religion as a living and still-growing evidence of its truth, having its events distributed through all future time, and supplying the world with

* Mat. xvi. 2.

† Luke xix. 43. 44.

‡ Luke xxi. 22, 23, 24.

§§ Luke xxi. 24.

the means of perpetual conviction. What a sublime idea does the vast chain of prophecy, commencing from the foundation of the world, and advancing through every age till it run out to the end of time, convey of that exalted dispensation, on which it was destined to attend!

At last, after submitting to an ignominious death, by his own power Christ RAISED himself from the grave, as a final confirmation of his doctrine. And when he had further instructed his Apostles, and given them a solemn commission to *teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, he publicly ASCENDED into Heaven, from whence he SENT DOWN THE HOLY GHOST to bring all things to their remembrance, whatever he had said or done among them, that they might be his faithful Evangelists to write and convey the principles of his religion, by the history of his life and actions, and to add all such things as were necessary to compleat the Christian doctrine.

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By this amazing body of supernatural evidence, the Christian Religion was planted in the earth, and it grew with incredible rapidity under the same extraordinary auspice and protection of Heaven. For how was it possible that a few illiterate fishermen, professing to be the messengers of one who had been universally reprobated and despised, and who had been ignominiously crucified, should abolish the ancient institutions of empires and states, without force, or artifice, or the powers of persuasion, and prevail with thousands to embrace a religion so opposite to their established worship, so hostile to their reigning passions, and so repugnant to their rooted prejudices, without the intervention of supernatural power? The PROPAGATION of the Gospel is itself a miracle that emulates any of the preceding, and is an example of the particular interposition of Providence unparalleled in the annals of mankind.

AND to crown this august and extensive train of evidence, behold the Religion planted by it, from so small a root, spreading

its luxuriant branches into every corner of the globe, and triumphing over every sect, persuasion, and religion upon earth. This inspires an uncommon and magnificent idea, which is incapable of being reconciled to our reason, but by considering it as advancing under the special direction of an omnipotent hand, and as the completion of our Saviour's allusive prophecy. *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in the field, which, indeed, is the least of seeds, but, when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

PART

DISCOURSE IV.

PART II.

HAVING grounded the sublime pretensions of Revelation on the infallible basis of the special agency of Heaven announced from the beginning of time, and augmented and displayed by a magnificent train of various Evidences transmitted to us in the writings of the Old and New Testaments, Infidelity can have no refuge, but in a palpable disbelief of the truth of these sacred records. Proceed we, therefore, after weighing the nature and force of historical testimony, to evince these two particulars—That the HOLY SCRIPTURES are the antient and genuine productions of those men whose names they bear—and, That the SACRED HISTORIANS were
neither

neither imposed upon themselves in what they relate, nor attempted by fraud to impose upon others.

SUCH facts as do not occur at the time in which we live, and in the place where we reside, so as to afford us an opportunity to witness them ourselves, can be proved to us only by the testimony of others. Do you believe in any piece of history, or in any traditional accounts?—That there were ever such cities as Athens and ancient Rome, whose respective inhabitants used the Greek and Latin tongues? You may see large monuments of these languages with histories written in them, in all the libraries of the Learned, and can you imagine these languages and histories to be the effect of modern invention? Impossible. The books, which are transmitted to us in any ancient tongue, are indubitable proofs of the existence of any people; and, if the antiquity of a people can be evinced from these monuments, we cannot, surely, question the antiquity of the monuments themselves. Do you believe that

that the books known by the names of Homer and Virgil are as ancient as they pretend, and that they were composed by the men whose names they bear? Do you credit a syllable of the histories of Livy or Thucidides, and think they were written by these ancient historians? Or can you suppose them, together with the two poetical productions, to be the fruits of modern artifice and chicane? If you are capable of entertaining this last opinion, believe nothing but what you see yourself, nor even that; remain an infidel, and disclaim all pretension or desire to be a Christian. But, if you can give credit to the existence of these ancient cities, to the antiquity of these languages, and to the genuineness of these authors, you have still more redundant and forcible evidence of the AUTHENTICITY of the Holy Scriptures.

I. THE books of the Old Testament come to our hands in the language of a people of more remote antiquity than Greece or Rome, beside that we have a very ancient translation of them in the language of the former, and

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Moses and the other authors have ever been in undisputed possession of the title to their several works ; so that, without examining any farther, both the antiquity of the bible is as clear as that of Homer, or any other book, and the title of its authors as fairly ascertained. But a whole nation was particularly devoted to preserve inviolable these sacred oracles, and to remain a standing witness of their origin to all future ages. An august and venerable body of men was set apart to wait upon the Sanctuary in which the ark of the temporary Covenant, the original Law, and the holy Ordinances were preserved, out of which body, a still more venerable order was consecrated to minister in all religious functions. With a diligence and accuracy almost incredible, this people transcribed the sacred traditions a thousand times over ; and the copies were dispersed through their numerous tribes and families, and kept as a sacred deposit. Their posterity, clearly and regularly deduced through a long series of generations, are, at this day, distinguished in the world and dispersed through every

every part. They still preserve the manuscripts of their forefathers uncorrupted, they have the same number of books in their canon which they had 2000 years ago, they observe the ordinances as religiously as possible, and are all circumcised in obedience to the Law of Moses; as if Providence destined them to remain a standing and perpetual memorial of that singular œconomy, which was appointed to usher the universal dispensation into the world, which came down from heaven, and which they blindly and unhappily reject.

To secure the religious records of the Jews from being corrupted in the earlier ages, a succession of Prophets raised by the hand of God, and invested with his divine commission to preside in the temporal and spiritual concerns of their theocratic government, was of important service. So long as this order of men continued, they would be careful to prevent the introduction of errors or interpolations. And, after they ceased, the number of transcripts of the sacred code was so increased, they were dispersed into so many hands, so frequently read and referred to,

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that no alteration could be attempted, without being immediately and publicly detected. But as the genuineness of the Old Testament is confirmed by Christ and his Apostles, who frequently appealed to it, and who would certainly have rejected any spurious part that might have taken place,

It will be sufficient to prove the authenticity of the New, which contains the principles of his religion, recorded in the four Gospels, the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles. This comes to our hands in the Greek tongue. The original Writings themselves, we know from just authority, were long preserved and frequently appealed to by the primitive Christians ; and we have in our possession, at this day, many Manuscripts of the several books, which can be proved to be more than 1000 years old, together with some Translations of them of still higher antiquity, and still more ancient Quotations by the earliest Christian writers.

As to the Authors, no doubt remains that all the books were written by those very men whose names they bear, since, besides their
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general and undisputed title, we find them distinctly ascribed to them by Writers * of the very next and succeeding ages. We meet with innumerable passages, in the works of commentators and divines, quoted from them, under their proper titles, in every age since they were written. They are all referred to by the most inveterate Enemies † as well as by the Friends to the Christian cause, in their disputations, and invariably attributed to their individual authors, Matthew, Mark, Paul, John. Nay we have the public attestation of men, ‡ who were personally acquainted with the Apostles themselves, or with their intimate companions, and had information from them, to confirm the title and extraction of these sacred writings. How, then, is it possible to conceive, that they are not as ancient and as authentic as they pretend? Can you, against such various, abundant, and accumulated evidence, suppose them to be otherwise?

* Clement the disciple of St. Paul, Polycarp of St. John, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tatian disciple of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen and Eusebius,

† Celsus, Julian and Porphyry.

‡ Ignatius and Polycarp.

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No: " Unless the Manuscripts, Versions, and Quotations in every language and dispersed through every country, be all counterfeit, these books have descended from the age to which they are referred. Unless the attestations, not only of contemporaries, but of men who conversed with the writers, and were instructed by them; unless all these public attestations deceive us, these books were composed by the persons to whom they are ascribed. "

After the original writings were lost, exact and immediate transcripts of them were kept, with a sacred care, in the archives of the Churches planted by the Apostles in different parts of the eastern world; when controversies arose, appeals were made to them, they were constantly and publicly read in Christian assemblies, and soon translated into other languages; so that they could not be corrupted in the infant ages of the Church, As Christianity spread, which pervaded the whole Roman Empire with incredible rapidity, copies of the New Testament were disseminated of course; and we may presume, that, since the art of printing was invented, there

DISCOURSE IV. 117

there have been more impressions of the sacred volume in every language, than of half the books in the world; so that it is impossible it should be corrupted in latter times. We, consequently, find, that upon collating all the manuscripts, translations, quotations, and editions, that can be procured in the world, they so exactly agree (excepting those trifling differences, which unavoidably happen in copying and transcribing) that not one fundamental article is changed or omitted, nor one leading feature disguised by any one.

But what are 1700 years? The lives of some men reach 100; and what are the lives of eighteen or twenty men? What are twenty or thirty generations? This venerable pile, in which we are now assembled, bears witness to the devotions of 600 years. Many religious houses of higher antiquity, are now entire, and some of the Roman castles, which were erected prior to the birth of Christ, are, at this day, in being. If the works of men's hands survive the depredations of time through so long a period, can we wonder, that the sacred records of a Religion, which was planted by the hand of God,

God, and conducted under the peculiar inspection of his Providence, should extend entire and uncorrupted to their latest posterity? If men can trace back the history of a Roman fort, or run through the annals of a private family, they can, surely, bear unembarrassed witness to each other in an affair of such immense and universal importance, as the Christian Religion. As the modern Jews can trace their records and religion through all the changes and revolutions of the world; so Christians, from the history of the church, are able to give a precise account of the books on which their religion is grounded, in every age since they were written. And, whilst the Christian accounts of times, places, customs, persons, and collateral transactions of other nations, from the very publication of the New Testament, coincide with those of their respective historians, these same historians throw in ample evidence to the support of the Christian cause.

II. BUT though, by the dint of these plain arguments, he be forced from his
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out-works and obliged to admit the Antiquity and Authenticity of the Holy Scriptures ; yet one strong-hold remains, into which the unbeliever retreats with confidence to defend the cause of infidelity and glory. ' They ' may be only the self-deception, or the ' fraud, of those who wrote them. '—To establish the CREDIBILITY of any history two points are to be canvassed—The *Knowledge* the writer had of his subject—and his *Integrity* as an honest relator. The first, if it be found competent, will convince us, that he was *not imposed upon himself* ; and the second, that he was *incapable of imposing upon others*.

1. THE history of the primitive ages came from the pen of Moses, who, from the singular eminence of his station, was particularly qualified to discharge the function of a sacred historian, and to command the credence and confidence of the Jews his contemporaries, and of those of every future generation. By him God had repeatedly delivered their nation, by the most illustrious miracles in Egypt, the Red Sea, and the Wilderness, for

a succession of more than 40 years, and, at last, raised him to the divine honour of being his temporary Mediator, when he gave them the Covenant and the Law, which were to remain in force till the Promise was fulfilled. This intercourse which he held with heaven, confirmed by so many signal and infallible proofs, could not fail to challenge the most implicit belief of his account of the transactions and dispensations of former times. The whole nation was convinced that he was inspired by the unerring Spirit of truth, and that he could not be imposed upon or deceived. His divine commission as a Law-giver secured his credit as an Historian, whilst the history, which he wrote, was a necessary introduction to the law which he delivered. And their posterity who were placed under the auspice of this Covenant, when they beheld the ark in which it was deposited, the cherubims by which it was guarded, and the visible glory of God, could not but look up with profoundest veneration and respect to him, through whose hands it came, reposing, at the same time, the most unshaken faith in his sacred records. In the
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ſucceeding ages, God raiſed up Judges and Prophets, from time to time, inveſted with ſupernatural powers, in order to continue his ſpecial intercourſe with this extraordinary people; and their ſucceeding memoirs, written by thoſe very men thus ſingularly qualified, are, in like manner, ſecured from every ſuppoſition of illuſive error. But, as has been obſerved, the Old Teſtament, being in every reſpect, confirmed by the New, we may proceed to prove the Credibility of the writers of the latter.

THAT, in the reign of Tiberius Ceſar the third Roman Emperor, ſuch an extraordinary man as Jeſus of Nazareth performed many conſpicuous miracles, taught new and wonderful doctrines, in many parts of Judea, and, at laſt, ſuffered death by crucifixion, is proved from the accounts tranſmitted to Rome by the officers of the Empire, in the annual returns of the Provinces, to which the ancient Chriſtians frequently and openly referred. This truth is farther confirmed by the Roman hiſtorians, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny, whoſe writings are

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now in our hands, and is what the boldest and most violent enemies of the Christian cause, in ancient times, had never the effrontery to deny. Josephus the Jewish annalist bears large and extensive evidence to our religion, in his minute and particular detail of the demolition of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans, and of the dispersion of the Jews, exactly coinciding with the predictions of Christ. These different historical accounts may induce the strongest presumption, that the subject of the Evangelical writers was no self-delusion; but we will descend to a more particular enquiry.

The miracles which they relate to have been exhibited as the credentials of Christ's divine authority, however wonderful, were the commonest objects of men's senses, obvious, familiar, and unsuspected. "They were very different in themselves, repeated at many different times, and before different persons, for the unremitted succession of two years, and had the same uniform and convincing effect on the senses of all. If they were all deceived, this deception is perhaps the greatest miracle that ever astonished the world,

world, and the power by which it was effected was sufficient to enforce a new religion. The *Twelve*, whom he ordained to be with him all the time that he went in and out among them, were unquestionable witnesses of all that he did and said. Certainly, they could not all be imposed upon, at all times, and in all the different trials. Two of the Evangelists, Matthew and John, were of this select number of inseparable witnesses of every word and action; that, which they heard, which they saw with their eyes, which they looked upon, and their hands handled of the word of life, they declare unto us. Luke had his instructions immediately from the mouth of St. Paul, to whom the Gospel had been especially revealed from Heaven; and Mark was the companion and interpreter of St. Peter, who was one of the Twelve. Their Knowledge of the subject must, of consequence, have been clear, distinct, and adequate,

2. THE same reasons, which secure the writers of the Old Testament from the charge of

of self-deception, protect them equally from the imputation of collusive fraud.

MUCH less can the Evangelists and Apostles be suspected as the instruments of an indirect design. To plan and conduct a forgery, in an affair however private and unimportant, has always been attended with difficulties, which call for no common share of abilities to surmount. Imagination cannot invent a circumstantial detail so uniform and consistent, but the eye of an ordinary critic can easily distinguish a history from a romance. But to write a fictitious account of considerable length, with minuteness and precision, and to negotiate a forgery through a series of time, so as to impose upon contemporary spectators, as well as upon all the learned part of mankind, in all future ages, requires abler talents than ever fell to the share of mortals. To frame such an unparalleled system of morality, as is contained in the Gospel; to give such an extraordinary account of the satisfaction made for sin, and the office of a mediator between God and man by a train of connected doctrines; to
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DISCOURSE IV. 125

feign the life and actions of the Messiah to correspondent to the ancient and seemingly inconsistent predictions of the Prophets, and to the types of the Mosaic institution, soars above the sublimest stretch of the wit and learning of the wisest men on earth. The system of Christianity, abstracted from its divinity, is more exalted and extensive than any other system in the world, natural, moral, or political. But who were the writers of these books, in which this admirable system is contained? Despised as simple and ignorant, reproached as rude and illiterate, men, few in number, out of the most abject walk of life, they were suffered to remain insensible of the nature of his kingdom, whilst their Master was with them, who *chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*. Their narrative is plain, open, and undisguised; simple, uniform, and consistent; without any shadow of art, cunning, or contrivance. They dont conceal his poverty and mean condition, the contempt with which he was treated, nor his ignominious death; neither do they suppress their own misconduct, ignorance

rance and cowardice, and their selfish views of temporal grandeur.

A fraud must have some worldly end or interest in view; but the Evangelists and Apostles purely disclaimed all temporal honour and advantage. Influenced by no other motive than a desire to instruct mankind in virtue and religion, they cheerfully underwent all possible danger, difficulty, and inevitable death, sealing the truth of the Gospel, by the voluntary effusion of their blood. Though opposed and persecuted by the greatest temporal power in the world; yet by patience, by meekness, by piety, by sincerity, and by sufferings, they reared the sceptre of Nazareth to spread its mild and salutiferous sway over all the kingdoms of the globe. In every point of view, their *Integrity* stands unimpeached. Their prospect and reward were in another world, and they overcame this by the power of God, as they were aided and instructed by his Spirit.

But had they been ever so able to put an imposition upon the world, or ever so inclined, they were entirely prohibited by the nature of the subject; for what they report

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no hidden transaction *done in a corner*, but the most public, uncontroverted, and noted facts, which they wrote and published at or near the time, and in the very place, in which they were done. These circumstances are universally acknowledged to be the most infallible tests of the fidelity of history, because the writer challenges the public at large to attest the truth of what he advances, or to contradict him, if they are able. Beside the select Twelve, the Evangelists mention Seventy, *whom the Lord sent before his face into every city and place, whither himself should come*. Do they not call upon these Seventy as vouchers and witnesses? They relate that Jesus miraculously fed four thousand, and five thousand, and that, after his resurrection, he was seen of five hundred at once; and by this publication, these different numbers are indirectly summoned to confirm these truths. When they relate the performance of any public miracle, they appeal to the whole body of the spectators, and, had their relations been false, they would have been immediately confronted, and for ever silenced. But they were never contradicted, nor called
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in question, and Christian churches were immediately founded on the basis of these faithful and unsuspected narrations, which are supported by more numerous and various witnesses, than any other historical record in the world. Emissaries from these churches preached the Religion of Jesus throughout the greatest part of the Roman Empire and eastern provinces, converting thousands every day; and it is impossible to imagine, that the wisest and most inquisitive men in the world, who lived so near the times of its first publication, and who had it so much in their power, had it been groundless, to detect and expose the fraud, should suffer themselves to be blinded in an affair of the most weighty and intimate concern.

BUT the final and most forcible argument not only of the *capacity* and *honesty*, but also of the *infallibility*, of the Evangelic penmen; is that the same persons, thus prepared and qualified to give a faithful narrative of the life and actions of their divine master, were inspired with supernatural aid for the execution of this important work; *God bearing them*

DISCOURSE IV. 129

them witness both with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. As Jesus Christ wrought miracles and foretold events by the Spirit of God, in evidence of his supernatural authority; so were they empowered, by the same Spirit, to perform similar miracles and to predict events, as an evidence that they faithfully and infallibly spoke and wrote what he did and taught, and that they were divinely commissioned to finish and complete his dispensation. Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. He is the Spirit of truth, and he shall lead you into all truth.

Hence may the whole world be convinced, that all holy Scripture was given by inspiration of God, and that it is to be wholly, universally, and implicitly believed and practiced; for the speech of its dispensers and their preaching were not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that our faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

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THIS discourse hath endeavoured to prove, that the Christian dispensation exhibits all the marks and characters of a divine *Revelation*, having been accompanied through a long series of ages, by an illustrious train of supernatural Evidences, as Types, Prophecies, and Miracles—That the *Holy Scriptures*, in which this Revelation is recorded, are possessed of all the most indubitable evidence a testimony can possibly enjoy, and much stronger evidence than any other testimony in the world, being as ancient as they pretend, being written by the very men to whom they are ascribed, being genuine and uncorrupted—and That the Writers were competent witnesses of what they have advanced; and honestly related what they saw and heard without fraud, collusion, or oblique design.

DISCOURSE V.

ON FAITH.

JOHN iii. 36.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

THE preceding discourses have been employed in opening the foundation, and displaying the general plan, of our Religion; in explaining how mankind were corrupted by the disobedience of Adam, and restored by Jesus Christ; in reviewing the evidences of Revelation, from which

these truths are derived, and in evincing the authenticity and credibility of the sacred Scriptures.

What presents itself, next, in the course of this great argument, is to take a more leisurely survey of the triple CONDITION enjoined by Christ, which, in subordination to his obedience and death, constitutes the essence of Religion on the part of man. Without the performance of this condition, the Covenant of Grace will be rescinded and abortive in its effects, the principal and meritorious part, which the Saviour hath sustained, will become useless, the immortal reward which he hath procured will be forfeited again, and we shall remain children of wrath, obnoxious to the aggravated punishment incurred by infringing the Covenant of works.

By the purchase which he made of the human race for no less a consideration than the *price of his blood*, Christ obtained a right to prescribe the terms of admission to the privileges of redemption; and, having disannulled the Original Law by discharging

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its condition, as our just and rightful Law-giver he enacted a New one of more benign and easy obligation, and solemnly enforced it by the sanction of his divine authority.

To them that, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, is promised eternal life; but, unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man that doeth evil.

To suppose that man should remain passive and involuntary in the work of his redemption would imply, that he could be saved in violation of the freedom of his will, which is the highest prerogative of his nature, and without which he is incapable of the end of his existence. It is highly indispensable that he co-operate with his Redeemer; and as it was requisite that Christ should discharge the condition of the First Covenant by his perfect obedience, so it is equally requisite that he shall discharge that of the Second by performing those inferior duties, which are adequate to his abilities and incumbent upon him; for though it be an inviolable truth, that we are saved alone by Christ, it involves no im-
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propriety to say, that we must save ourselves by him.

The Condition of the Covenant of Grace divides into three cardinal branches, FAITH, OBEDIENCE, and REPENTANCE, all enacted by the same authority, all under the same sanction, all making one law, which our Saviour will have universally obeyed, without partiality, exception, or reserve.

ALTHOUGH every part of the evangelic law be of the same necessity and of equal obligation, yet FAITH is the sovereign and leading duty, the genuine root from which the sister duties spring, and which gives them all their value; for, as all our claims to an happy immortality originate with Christ, unless they are principled in Faith, they will ever remain unproductive of the fruits of salvation. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

If the Almighty hath favoured the world with an especial Revelation of his will, if he hath proposed his gracious Covenant by the

the mediation of his Son, and if he hath sealed his Religion by infallible attestations of his supreme authority, these gracious overtures on the part of heaven impose upon us an indispensable obligation to embrace its doctrines with a grateful heart, and to give them the full assent and approbation of our minds. And this is no more than what the office of the dispenser of a revelation obliges him to demand, else he will depreciate the importance of his commission and destroy its use, by insinuating, that it is of indifferent moment, and may be admitted or rejected at pleasure.

But this celestial virtue is not content in yielding a lifeless assent to the truths of religion; it embraces them with a zealous and fervent affection, and rests in them with confidence and holy trust. It is no mere exercise of the head, but is a vital and active principle which exerts itself in love, gratitude, and every species of virtue. *We love God, because we believe that he first loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins; and, for these reasons, we shall ever be solicitous to obey his will.* Thus Faith

is distinguished by the title of *the greatest of virtues*; and if we contemplate its immediate objects, the doctrines delivered in the Gospel, together with the authority that enjoined them, we shall find a full persuasion of their truth enforcing every precept of the moral law. Do we believe in God? We shall consequently love, fear, reverence, and pay him homage. Do we believe the incarnation, the obedience, and the sacrifice, of his Son? We shall be induced to obey his commands, to imitate his example, and to rely upon his death. Do we believe the rewards which are promised, and the punishments which are denounced in the Gospel? They will effectually operate on every duty. All reasonable practice must have an adequate motive to prompt and to inspire it. The beauty, the propriety, the utility of virtue, however resounded and extolled, are too feeble and unsubstantial to produce an uniform and unshaken Obedience; and Repentance is too painful a task to be undergone for the sake of mere undowered virtue. They demand a more efficacious principle to give them life and operation, a principle which makes its ad-

DISCOURSE V. 137

addresses to our hopes and fears, by holding out the rewards and terrors of religion. It is the glory of *Faith* that it *worketh by love*, and is distinguished by its effects, as a tree by its fruits, or a fountain by its streams ; and whilst, in part, it unveils the glory of the celestial abode, it terminates in the practice of that virtue, which alone can conduct us to it.

The virtue of Faith consists in a free and full persuasion of the truth of our holy Religion, in a voluntary and virtuous assent to all those supernatural doctrines revealed in the holy Scriptures, out of which the most essential articles have been collected in former times, and arranged into compendious summaries, in the *Three Creeds* of the Church of England.

THE Christian Faith is GROUNDED on the testimony of God revealed to men ; whilst human knowledge is principled in our experience and observations on the works of nature and the operations of the mind, prosecuted by the acts and deductions of Reason. Reason is the glory of our nature, the eye of the intellectual system, and

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ought to be the guide of our life, where we are not possessed of a guide of superior and more infallible authority; yet experience compels us to lament, that the grounds upon which it operates are frequently uncertain or obscure, that its deductions are often embarrassed and precarious, and that the knowledge derived from it is not uncommonly dark and unsatisfactory. But it is the peculiar glory of Faith, that the knowledge, which it imparts, rests on a certain and infallible basis, the testimony of Him; who is the God of nature, and the God of Reason, whose immortal eye penetrates, at one glance, through all the labyrinths of time, and whose knowledge pervades immediately through the regions of space. His knowledge and his veracity are the criterion of its truth. What we assent to from the conviction of Reason, we are said to *know*; what we assent to under the auspice of Faith; we are said to *believe*. This is the genuine distinction between *Faith and Science*. One is from heaven; the other is of the earth; one is of God, the other is peculiar to men. That, which is revealed in the holy Scriptures, does not depend upon the
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precarious result of our understanding, to be admitted or rejected according to the ignorance, or the knowledge, of men; it is certain, infallible, and divine, *that our faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

But, since the means, by which we arrive at the grounds of Faith, are submitted to the cognizance of our natural powers; since the evidences of a revealed religion are addressed to our ordinary capacities; and since the knowledge of these evidences is conveyed to us by the sacred testimony of the Scriptures, whose divine extraction is evinced by an extensive train of human testimony; we must call in Reason to exert her sublimest efforts in clearing the way to the foundation of Faith. However divine its origin, however mystical and sublime its nature, the Christian Religion applies itself to our rational faculties, challenges their investigation, and solicits their assent. Though the province of Revelation is to inform us of what lies beyond the line of Reason, yet it is the province of Reason to take a proper cognizance of Revelation. Thus, by canvassing the pretensions of the Gospel,

the rational Christian is convinced that it came from heaven. He believes the bible, not because it was transmitted to him by his father, not because it contains the established religion of the state, not because it comes recommended by the belief and authority of others, but because it convinces his understanding. This is he, whose glory it is, that *he is able to give, or however to feel, a reason of the faith that is in him.*

Though Reason can never aspire to be the companion of Religion, she is its most useful friend and hand-maid. But, when she enters into its service, let her contemplate with serious attention its sublimity and divine extraction. Let her consider, that, however she may be the glory of man, she is herself no more than human; and let her tread on hallowed ground with humble and cautious step. By attending to the nature of Religion, she will learn how far her assistance will be useful, and where her operations ought to stop. Here let her draw the line, and at her peril dare to pass it.—Religion is the immediate offspring of heaven; its nature is *divine*, and *singular*. With its nature and doctrines human Reason has no concern, only to acquiesce

acquiesce in reverential silence. Its singularity, also, excludes experience, the only foundation on which she proceeds in her operations. What can she find in the compass of nature to compare it with, in order to judge and to resolve? All those regions of knowledge which are placed on the side of immortality, are forbidden ground. The holy Scriptures are a detachment from the eternal councils, to be the guide of our conduct, and the rule of our Faith. Let Reason content herself to enquire—When and by whom the several books were written—Whether they are the genuine and uncorrupted works of those whose names they bear—Whether the writers had a full knowledge, and were competent judges, of the facts which they relate—Whether their integrity can be relied on, as honest and faithful historians—Whether the facts, transactions and evidences, which they record, are sufficient credentials of a divine Revelation; and whether they prove the Doctrines which they support to be sealed by supreme authority. And, lastly, let her investigate the true and distinct meaning of these sacred records, by comparing phrases

phrases with phrases, passages with passages, and profane with sacred writings of the same date. With conscious fallibility, she may deduce the expedience of Revelation from the corruption of our nature, and from the attributes of God; she may illustrate the œconomy of the divine dispensations by arguments drawn from the nature of that œconomy itself; and she may evince scriptural truths on scriptural principles, as she accounts for natural phænomena by experimental observations. Reason and Philosophy thus employed cannot possibly disserve the cause of Religion. Thus directed in their researches, they furnish abundance of incontestable evidence in support of Revelation. They bear witness to the mission and divine authority of Jesus. They dismantle infidelity from the iron throne it had erected in the heart, banish error and superstition from brooding on the sacred pavillion of religion, and rejoice to place Faith, the fair offspring of heaven, on the immoveable seat of the understanding,

Thus Reason leads us through the mazes of testimony divine and human to the temple of Faith, and leaves us on the sacred threshold,
Faith

DISCOURSE V. 143

Faith receives us under her auspice, and, if we obey her voice, she will conduct us safely to the eternal fountain of happiness and life. Though the credentials of Faith are amenable to an earthly tribunal, yet, when these are once adjusted, she soars above the highest stretch of Reason in certainty, in sublimity, and in power. She extends our hopes beyond the limits of human life, and opens an enlivening view into the scenes of a future world; and though her objects be denied the intercourse of our senses, because too big for our capacities to comprehend, yet are they determined as to their reality, and will be certain in the event.

St. Paul defines *Faith* to be *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. What evidence, it may be asked, can we have of things not seen? Or, how can we believe in what we never experienced?—The assurance of the infallible God is, surely, sufficient evidence, far above that of sense, or experience. But the practicability of a rational faith shines conspicuous out of every part of the system of religion, which is calculated to cap-

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tivate the wishes, to interest the hopes, and to influence the whole constitution, of man. Whilst they transcend every human idea, do not the doctrinal truths of religion correspond with his sublimest conceptions of the Deity, and coincide with all his attributes? When he contemplates the nature of God and his own depraved condition, on the least notion of such an expedient as Redemption, how ardently would he wish, how fervently hope, that it is true! But when he is made acquainted with the whole plan by which it was conducted, and the illustrious series of connected truths, by which it was brought to a happy issue, how greatly will he rejoice, how solemnly reverence, how effectually approve! When he finds the Christian Religion, upon a nearer inspection, to be holy and benevolent as the God that gave it, pure and exalted as the heaven from whence it came; when he beholds it administering a supply to every want, an object to every expectation, and a cure to every wound; when he feels every terror dissipated, every hope enlivened, every wish confirmed; when he finds it congenial to his sublimest
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DISCOURSE VI 145

sentiments and to the native elevation of his soul, its precepts advancing the purity of his heart, the love of his God, and his goodwill to men, its mysteries exciting his reverence, his devotion, his desire of heaven, and its doctrines giving him possession of immortal life;—can human flesh refrain from crying out, *Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief!* When his understanding is finally convinced, by the most infallible evidences, that this gracious dispensation has been actually executed and carried through all its stages; and when this dispensation itself is presented before him with its proofs and attestations in the book of the sacred Scriptures, which was dictated by the Spirit of truth, and which is confirmed by the most extensive and concurrent body of human testimony; he will embrace and confide in every part, however some things may exceed his highest conception, however mysterious they may be, however inconsistent they may seem with the principles of human belief, though his eyes are not able to see, his intellects to comprehend, or his reason to understand them, be-
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cause He, who made him, knew, and He, who told him, could not lie.

FAITH is to be considered as the offspring of Him, whose *ways are far above our ways, and whose thoughts are far above our thoughts*; so that the MYSTERIES of Revelation, whose office is indeed to inform us of what lies out of the sphere of human knowledge, can be no bar to its operation. At one glance it can comprehend and subdue them all. Though its foot hath condescended to touch the earth, its head reaches above the clouds. And since its objects lie beyond the precincts of this visible world, can we wonder that a mortal eye should see them only as *through a glass darkly*? We are appointed, in this terrestrial abode, *to walk by Faith and not by sight*, and under the auspice of such an infallible director, we need not, surely, lament that the celestial mansions are not displayed to view. Presumptuous man, be content to do thy duty for a little while here on earth, and, for a few fleeting years, to believe and to trust thy God; at length the curtain of life will drop, in happy hour, when a
grander

grander scene will open, when Faith will rise into enjoyment, and when to thy purged eye eternal objects will shine out in all their native splendour!

But so far from impeding the progress of Religion, mysteries attend upon her as a sacred guard, to defend her from the attacks of insolence, and to command a reverence to her name. With what sublime and mystic grandeur is the Almighty described as revealing himself to men. *He bowed the heavens and came down, and it was darkness under his feet. He made darkness his secret place; his pavillion round about him with dark waters and thick clouds to cover him.* By the hidden sublimity of her truths, Religion reminds us of our ignorance, and restrains our pride. Robed in majestic darkness, enthroned in mystic glory, she retires from the assaults of impious curiosity. As out of a splendid cloud, which commands our reverence though it intercepts our sight, she pours down her blessings upon us. She calls to Reason, and commands her to usher her down into the world, but bids her keep at awful distance, lest, if she attempt to approach

approach too near, that light, which is impervious to her mortal eye, should strike her blind.

By her mysteries also Religion addresses herself to that predominant principle of the human soul, its desire of knowledge. Part she displays to view, and that adorned with beauty; part she leaves concealed, with a certain intimation that is still more glorious. How is the ardour of the Soul increased! How are the flames of desire kindled! How does she long to be filled with divine instruction and ineffable wisdom! How does she breath after that evangelic state of perfection, in which the Deity will display the glory of his nature, the wisdom of his providence, and the wonders of his councils! Despise not, vain man! the mysteries of Religion. Rather be thankful, that God hath vouchsafed thee so much religious knowledge as is sufficient for thy use here, and to kindle a desire of immortality hereafter, but not so much as to engross all thy attention, and to render thee neglective of the duties of life—that he hath vouchsafed to discover so much, and to conceal no less.

But why do we stumble at the mysteries
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of Religion alone? Why are we affronted that our knowledge is abridged in this, which is abridged in every other, department of science? A certain barrier of adamant is set to all human enquiries, in nature, in morals, as well as in religion, which if we attempt to pass, we are lost in more than Egyptian darkness. With much labour we cultivate a distant acquaintance with sensible objects, and, from experimental observations on the powers and affections of things, derive some general laws, perhaps of important service to human life; but as to the essence of their nature, so long as we are mortal, we must be content to remain ignorant. From the formation of a mite to the constitution of the human soul, is an ocean of mystery.

Let both Reason and Faith be content to move within the limits assigned them by Omniscience. As the one will conduct us with propriety and honour through this life, so the other will open the way to glory and immortality in the next; and when we behold Nature as great a mystery as Revelation, we can, surely, think it no greater affront to our understanding for God to reveal

veal such things as it cannot comprehend, than it is to make a world, which it cannot comprehend : For, as thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child ; even so thou knowest not the counsels of God, who maketh all.

DISCOURSE V.

PART II.

ALTHOUGH, in certainty, in sublimity, and in power, Faith eclipses the efforts of Science, in the proportion that the knowledge of God is superior to that of men; yet the MEANS, by which we arrive at the principles of Science, are more directly convincing, than those, by which we, of these remoter ages, climb up to the Foundation of Faith: for, whilst the principles of the former are investigated by our immediate *senses* in experimental observations, we advance to the grounds of the latter, only through the *testimony* of others. This testimony may, however, be so strongly authenticated, attended with such clear and convincing circumstances, and possessed of such positive qualifications, namely, the knowledge, credibility,

dibility, consistency, honesty, and number of witnesses, as to raise in the mind a degree of certainty, though not so palpable, yet as satisfactory, as the evidence of sense. A numerous and extensive gradation marks the the scale of evidence, from the refulgent light of ocular Demonstration to the faintest glimmerings of Probability; and however the inquisitive petulance of some can never rest contented unless they climb up to the confines of demonstration for the proof of every question, it is an honour due to the candid and rational inquirer, that he thankfully acquiesces in such evidence as is *sufficient* to challenge his assent, in such as is adapted to the *purpose*, and in such as is suited to the *nature* and *genius* of his subject. Let us examine whether the species of evidence which attends the dispensation of the Gospel be possessed of these singular and important qualities.

I. Too many are disposed to murmur in the language of ingratitude and discontent, that in the important affair of religion they are denied the evidence of sense which was
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vouchsafed to the immediate disciples of our Lord. This, it is greatly to be feared, is only the effect of a vitiated and a corrupt heart. Have they not Moses and the Prophets? Have they not the Evangelists and Apostles? Have they not *the lively oracles of God*, as powerful and convincing as living witnesses? Have they not the clear and concurrent testimony of all the intermediate ages, the attestations of friends and enemies, to confirm their truth and authenticity? Have they not the evidences, the expediency, the œconomy, of our religion canvassed and examined by learned men, and exhibited to view in one admirable and connected plan? And do they not acknowledge the internal evidence of its immense utility, its vital purity, and its universal excellence? In a word, the numerous branches of testimony divine and human, which concur in the support of the Christian cause, and which are augmented by every other source of rational conviction, flowing down upon us through all ages and nations and gathering strength the farther they descend from the fountain-head, meet together in one collected point, and form

such a body of evidence, as no other testimony in the world. If all this be INSUFFICIENT to enforce conviction, the evidence of sense would be afforded them in vain ; and, to apply the words of our Lord, who hath left us a parable to illustrate this unhappy truth, *If they believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

BUT the evidence of testimony is alone adapted to the PURPOSE of the Christian Religion, which was not given to one generation only, but which was destined to be *the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* It was, indeed, planted, at first, by such supernatural means as made their address to the senses, but it was left to be conveyed to futurity by the agency of human means, under the especial superintendence of heaven. Had the supernatural means been continued to be repeated to men's senses for a series of time, habit would have given them every appearance of natural events, they would soon have lost their attesting nature, and have long since been considered as no evidence

evidence at all. Did we see bodies rise from the grave, as we see corn spring from the furrow, we should account for similar effects from similar causes; and, by being common and familiar, all the mighty works of Jesus and his Apostles would dwindle into ordinary occurrences. Even Prophecies, which are so admirably calculated to travel with our religion from age to age, by being predicted and fulfilled on every occasion the infidel might require, would lose their attesting power; for we should consider the knowledge of the future almost as essential to us as of the past and present. But, by withdrawing the divine evidences by which the Gospel was planted, and by leaving its propagation and success to the conduct of human means, the intelligent hand of Providence gives them all their force to the latest posterity; for by that solid and corroborated testimony which accompanies his religion, we are, as it were, transplanted into the place of those who saw the miracles, and heard the doctrine, of Christ confirmed with power. Nor is the force of this testimony invalidated by the length of time through which it has

advanced ; for traditional truths, if important and well-attested, so far from being weakened by repetition, are strengthened and confirmed; and whatever weight their credit loses by distance of time, is more than recovered by the bulk and magnitude to which it increases in its course. Thus are all the treasures of our divine religion calculated to flow pure and unimpaired to the remotest ages. Short-sighted mortals ! suppress your murmuring, contemplate and adore the ways of heaven, and rest assured, that whatever it decrees is the wisest and the best.

But, though the evidences of Christianity shine upon us with as convincing lustre as they did on the immediate witnesses, on account of the extensive medium of human tradition through which they have to pass, more difficulties lie in our way to the rational foundation of Faith. Their conviction flowed immediately from their senses without labour or studious research. No learning was required, no abilities to be exerted. With us the case is different. By tedious and cautious steps, we are obliged to tread back the sacred road, to travel through the annals of Europe
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and of Asia, and to surmount the defiles thrown across our way by infidelity, before we arrive at the living fountain which flows from Sion's hill. Hence the importance, and the honour, of the study of Divinity. Hence the necessity, that a select body of men should be consecrated to the service of religion, and appointed with such temporal emoluments, as may enable them to devote their time, learning, and abilities, to this most important of all inquiries. The primary evidences of our holy religion are by no means dispensed with a parsimonious hand; and the secondary evidences, namely those of testimony, are still more various and extensive, and lie dispersed through distant regions of time and place. To collect the former into a regular system, so as to deduce their joint and accumulated force; and to arrange the latter into a connected series, so that the chain of testimony may be uniform and complete, calls for the joint application of labour, learning, and ingenuity, and, above all, for the exertions of a virtuous and pious heart. And it is no way inconsistent with that humility, which is a leading feature of the religion

religion we profess, to contemplate the use and the dignity of this sacred Order in the scale of society, which is appointed, by more than human authority, to enforce its evidences, to inculcate its principles, and to promote the eternal interests of men—A work, which obscures the praise of patriots and heroes, as much as the endless felicity of an immortal spirit outweighs every advantage that can accrue to any number of men, through the fleeting periods of time.

Under whatever disadvantages we of these remoter ages may be said to labour, they are more than repaid by the numerous advantages we enjoy above the primitive witnesses. Consider the many inveterate prejudices they had to combat in their own breasts. Reflect on the difficulties they had to conquer from without. Read the history of the first propagation of the Gospel, which was to the *Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness*, and be thankful that you live in an age humanized by that religion, for which they bled. We are nursed in the fostering bosom of the Church, and educated under her maternal care. We have their invaluable

able records, the fruits of their labours and of their celestial intercourse, for our instruction, and their examples for our encouragement; and we enjoy all the advantages of learning, leisure, and emolument, to facilitate our researches. Surely, with all this assistance, it is no mighty hardship that we are obliged to travel up the sacred way to the fountain of immortality and life. How can the faculties of man be more worthily employed, or on sublimer subjects?

As it is impossible the inhabitants of every age and nation should enjoy the evidence of an ocular demonstration, let it be our glory to establish our Faith on the authentic testimony of those who did, humbly hoping, that the greater piety, assiduity, and humility, which we exert in our religious investigations, the more abundant will be our reward. *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;* When we hear a blessing, pronounced by Christ, with a peculiar emphasis, upon Faith grounded on those very circumstances in which we are placed, how thankfully should we rejoice, how diligently enquire

enquire, how steadily believe! When those numbers, who saw the miracles of Jesus, rejected his doctrines and ascribed his works to Beelzebub, whilst we, in these distant ages, ground our Faith on the testimony of others with firmest confidence, this will, doubtless, at a future day, redound to their misfortune and to our glory. *We are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* Wherein we greatly rejoice, that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen we love, in whom though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

III. Such are the Means of Faith, which the hand of Providence holds out to us, and which it promises to extend to all future ages. In these superabundant means it becomes us with reverence and gratitude to acquiesce, especially when we consider, that
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were it possible for our religion to be always accompanied with a superior evidence, this would be in danger of destroying the NATURE of our Faith. By the joint operation of his reason, his liberty, and virtue, man is constituted a moral agent, responsible for his conduct. The Christian Religion assumes him as such, and calls upon him to bear a counterpart in the work of his salvation. Were it enforced by a demonstrative evidence, it would silence his reason by compelling his assent, disqualify his liberty, and defeat his virtue, and could not possibly be the object of that Faith, which delights, above all things, to be seated in the understanding, to be the source of every virtue, and to give scope and operation to the whole moral system. But let its evidence be of an inferior sort, such as may solicit the investigation of reason, and satisfy it after a humble and virtuous enquiry, the will, with all its prerogatives, will come into action, and every virtuous affection will be displayed. Man's attention will be excited, his industry will be aroused, his desires kindled, his love promoted, and every spring

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of the moral and intellectual systems will have a free and full exertion.

Thus it is evermore the glory of our religion that it is both a willing and a reasonable service, which idea is farther supported by the particular GENIUS of the Gospel-dispensation. Our Lord, could, doubtless, have enforced his doctrines with such overpowering evidence, as even to have taken from the Jews their unbelieving hearts ; but, from his general conduct, he seems to have been more anxious to excite the attention, to kindle the desires, to move the virtuous affections, and to invite the humble endeavours, of the willing and well-disposed. His parables were admirably adapted to this purpose ; for, by couching under them his heaven-instructed doctrines, they were addressed with success only to the tractable dispositions of such of his hearers, as were worthy to receive, and willing to improve, them ; but to others, *that hearing they might hear, and not perceive, and seeing they might see, and not understand.* We may hence infer, that, however satisfactory to the diligent and virtuous inquirer, the Evidences of the Christian Religion were
never

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never intended to shine with such irresistible force, as to convince those, whose pleasure is to love darkness rather than light.

AND when the terms of our salvation are promulged with all that evidence which its Omniscient Author hath deemed proper and sufficient for our conviction, whether we shall accept, or whether we shall reject, them, is not a matter of indifference left to the determination of our choice. After the God of Heaven hath projected a plan from the foundation of the world, and carried it through a number of successive stages, by the intervention of his Prophets and the ministration of his Angels, to its final consummation in his Son; after he hath sealed its divinity by the public attestation of stupendous miracles, under the direction of his Holy Spirit, and, by the interposition of his Providence, hath transmitted the most authentic and infallible records of it to these distant ages; think not that this august dispensation is to be rendered useless and abortive by the caprice, the obstinacy, or the inadvertency of men. No: To whom-

soever the Report of the Gospel is come, by that Gospel must he stand or fall ; for *he that rejecteth me, and heareth not my words, saith the Lord, hath one that judgeth him : The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day,*

To wind up the whole. *Faith* is the first and fundamental part of the Condition of the Gospel-Covenant—It is *grounded* on the testimony of God revealed to men, and extends to divine and celestial objects ; whilst human knowledge rests on the authority of sense and reason, and is confined to human and earthly things ; yet are the grounds of Faith subject to the cognizance of Reason—With the *Mysteries* of Religion we have no concern, but merely to believe ; they are no bar to the operation of our Faith. — The *Means* through which we advance to the grounds of Faith, is the evidence of human testimony—which is abundantly *sufficient* to determine an ingenuous mind—which is alone adapted to the *purpose* of confirming a religion for a series of time—and which is both adapted to the *nature* of our Faith and countenanced by the *genius* of the Gospel.

And

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And, as these means were deemed, by the Author of our Religion, sufficient for our use and for his glory, whether we espouse or discard them, will be decisive of our fate.

So necessary, so sublime, and so rational, is the virtue of Faith. Above all, what divine support and consolation does it administer to the Soul! When she is oppressed by the cares, and stung by the arrows, of the world, Faith can infuse an assuaging and a healing balsam. Weighed down by the severity of pain, affliction, and disease, she looks up to Faith as her deliverer. When that body, which once gloried in its vigour and beauty, is enfeebled and defaced, when the bright scenes of life are divested of their gaiety and become dull and cheerless, when they put off the drapery of youth to take the wintry coat of age; under all these temporary decays and dreary prospects, Faith can support the falling fabric and the feeble knee, by directing us to look forward to a distant country, where brighter scenes will open, and perpetual youth ensue. Raised above the world upon the impregnable
rock

rock of Faith, the Soul looks down with indifference on the variable tumultuous tide of human things, and, in venerable dignity, stands unruffled by the storms and tempests which disturb this visionary scene. Without faith she is doubtful, bewildered, perplexed, unhappy. By Faith her doubts are all removed, her fears are all dispelled, her desires are all awakened, her hopes are all confirmed. In her last and severest conflict with human nature, when she languishes amidst the ruins of her falling habitation, Faith is *her shield and buckler, her iron pillar and her wall of brass*. And when she stands upon the brink of the vast ocean of eternity, without turning her eye to leave one lingering wish behind, she is loosed as a ship from her cables, reposing all her confidence on Faith, as an infallible pilot to steer her into the harbour of safety, into the joy of endless ages.

You, whose pride, prejudice, singularity, the coldness or inhumanity of whose hearts, or whatever cause, excludes the virtue of Faith—You, who reject the truths of the
Bible

Bible under a pretence that they are contrary to your reason and above your understanding, pause a moment to reflect whether you have made a right use of that reason and understanding. Have you, instead of meddling with what it was never intended you should know, laid the evidences of a divine Revelation before you in one collective view, and deduced the general argument? Have you considered the vast chain of prophecies, and the stupendous miracles by which it is supported, the amazing progress of the Christian profession, and the illustrious society of saints and martyrs who died to attest its truth? Have you contemplated the sublimity of its doctrines, the purity of its precepts, and the perfect sanctity of its Author? Have you canvassed the pretensions of those Scriptures by which it is transmitted to you, their antiquity, authenticity, and integrity? Have you run through the annals of Europe, and traced back the history of the Church? You who ignorantly demand, in every age, the evidence of your senses to convince you, have you thoroughly weighed the evidence of testimony, and suffered it to have its force?

Have

Have you applied for the assistance of wise and learned men, and wished to be helped to proper books? Have you read the defences of Christianity as well as the attacks upon it; and, when you had drank the deadly poison, did you take care to apply the antidote? In short, have you done all that was in your power, with a sincere and honest intent? If you can ask your heart all these questions, and answer them truly in the affirmative, there is little danger of dying within the gloomy pale of infidelity. Or: Do you vainly persuade yourselves that you will be protected from the terrors of another world by the barrier of wilful ignorance, which you are at so much pains to erect against them.—You sceptic, you free-thinker, you minute philosopher, you libertine, you profane jester, you infidel of every denomination, in a word, you who are against the Gospel, because its purity, and punishments are against you, take courage and acquit yourselves as men. Dare to look through the cloud of vice, and vanity, and folly, by which conviction is shut out. You, who delight to be born down the
stream

stream of life, whose brinks are enamelled with pleasures, and lusts, and false illusive flowers, with a smooth enchanting gale, shake off your lethargy, and cast one look forward, before you are irrecoverably swept into the dead sea. Your salvation is an affair of no trifling concern; it demands seriousness and attention. In your religious enquiries, therefore, be sober, be candid, be impartial. Divest yourselves of passion; prejudice, and every evil affection. Reject the world and the world's law. Retire into yourselves. Consult the heart. Appeal to the conscience. They will guide you more infallibly than the head alone. And remember, that if you remain obstinate against reasonable conviction, *if you sin wilfully, after that you have received sufficient knowledge of the truth—there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

To behold an opposite character under the sacred auspice of a rational faith, with an ennobled and invigorated mind, with an humility characteristic of his profession, with

an inflexible and determined magnanimity, persevering in the path of religious fear, marching undismayed through the sollicitations of the patrons of vice, the jests of the profane, the scoffs of infidels, the pride of scepticism, and the oppositions of the world, and looking down upon them all with an eye of charity and pity, is a prospect which Angels may view with pleasure.

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DISCOURSE VI.

ON OBEDIENCE

1. CORINTHIANS XII. 31.

And yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

HE who hath washed away our infirmities with his blood, cancelled our offences, and merited eternal redemption, hath obtained an absolute and uncontroverted sway. He is the captain of our salvation, and we are enlisted under his banner to follow, and to obey, him.

Though *Faith* be the fundamental part of our religious obligation, yet is *Obedience*

of equal authority, and equally essential to the Christian system; for, as the former is the only genuine stock from which the latter can spring to any salutary purpose, so, without the latter, the former is devoted to lie dormant in the ground. It is the glory of Faith, that it issue in goodness, and operate in the conduct of a holy life; and Obedience derives its value from the religious principle from which it springs. Faith is the root, Works are the branches; and as the branches cannot grow or blossom without the root, so neither can the root bear fruit without the branches. They must both grow together, in order that they may flourish together, and advance hand in hand to the summit of perfection. In a word, as in the human composition, the soul and body make one individual person, so in the œconomy of religion, Faith and Righteousness make one inseparable virtue—The Christian Faith which worketh by Love. The Scriptures themselves not only put us in possession of this illustrative comparison, but farther pronounce, that, *as the body without the spirit is dead, so Faith without works is dead also.*

Let

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Let us, first, consider of what Obedience consists, and how it should be qualified; secondly, how it tends to raise and refine our nature; and, thirdly, we will endeavour to obviate some mistakes that have obtained in this part of religion.

I. To establish moral virtue was a principal object in the contemplation of the founder of our religion. To this all his doctrines, precepts, and institutions immediately subserve. It is the natural *law written in our hearts*, which was seconded by the Almighty in all his revelations to mankind, and of which the *Ten Commandments* are a beautiful and compendious summary. It is of universal and unchangeable obligation; and our Saviour, in whom all religious dispensations were completed, re-enacted it by his supreme authority, enlarged its bounds, and enjoined its observance, as an important part of the Condition of the Covenant of Grace.

To believe, abstractedly considered, is an act which flows spontaneously from the mind, in consequence of a train of evidence well considered and judiciously applied; but to obey is attended with greater difficulties,
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and requires more vigorous, and more painful exertions. The Obedience of a Christian pervades the whole tenor of his life. In it, every thought and action, are more or less involved. It branches into a number of obligations—to his God—to his Neighbour—and to Himself. In regard to God, he is commanded to love, to fear, to serve, to honour, him, and to tender a constant tribute of holy worship. In regard to his neighbour, he is to be just, kind, courteous, tender-hearted, merciful, to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, to supply the indigent, and to let the streams of his beneficence flow to all the human race. In relation to himself, he is to be sober, temperate, chaste, and humble, to restrain the exorbitancy of passion, to set his affections on things above, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. All these duties are minutely enforced in the sermons and conversations of our Lord, and lie dispersed through every part of the New Testament. They are love, peace, piety, integrity, honesty, patience, temperance, forgiveness, with every kind of practical virtue that is, or can be named,

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named. And to that high point of excellence does the Gospel carry the obligation of the moral law, that it commands us *to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us,* and to widen the sphere of our benevolence to its farthest limits. This collective body of evangelical graces is comprehended under the common name of CHARITY, and its general law is, *To do to others, as we would they should do unto us.*

These are the *Precepts* of the Gospel delivered for the conduct of Christian life. And, as Example is of more popular influence, affording stronger inducements to practice, because it makes its address to the senses, and calls upon that imitative faculty which is ever active in the constitution of man, and which is the easiest and most natural mean of transplanting virtue into the heart, our divine Master condescended to leave a pattern of every duty in his own person, to evince its practicability, to excite our industry, and to encourage our endeavours, attended with a special injunction, that we should *follow his steps.*

Human

Human life is the stage on which we are placed, in all the diversity of character, to act our decisive parts, and to discharge all the duties of religion as their occasions may occur. If we neglect to perform them in a sincere and honest heart, by breaking our part of the holy Covenant, we forfeit our claim to that high reward which is promised on the part of heaven. And, if the Covenant be subject to be rescinded by the *omission* of these duties, what consequence may we expect to ensue from *committing* those several vices and enormities which stand opposed to them? This will be to throw a double weight into the balance of iniquity; and to turn the scale of infinite justice irrecoverably against us; *for he that committeth sin is of the devil*, and will be devoted to share his punishment.

THE commands of the Gospel are numerous and extensive, and that our Obedience may ascend with the qualifications of an acceptable sacrifice, it must be universal, bearing an equal respect to all. For though the omission or the violation of some duties incurs more guilt than the omission or violation

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tion of others, and will, doubtless, draw down a heavier punishment ; yet the criminality of our vices is not to be estimated so much by their proper quality, as by the contempt which they betray of the divine authority. And since every the minutest precept was enjoined by Christ, the wilful breach or neglect of it is an aggravated sin. An habitual omission, therefore, of one Gospel-duty, or a deliberate indulgence of one favourite vice, as it is to insult the face of heaven by a repeated defiance of its great inhabitant, so it will draw over us that condemnation, which our strictest observance of every other command will be unable to remove. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and thus offend in one point, he is guilty of all—he is guilty of violating the authority by which all was enacted : For he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill ; now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.* We may hence apprehend the danger of cherishing a favourite sin ; for by this means it becomes habitual and deliberate, and our contempt of the sovereignty of heaven will

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be habitual and deliberate too. Should this darling vice, which we foster in our bosom, be of a deeper stain, the divine displeasure will rise in proportion, and its punishment will bear a proportionable aggravation. But even the indulgence of faults of a lighter cast can poison the whole fountain of our virtue, and canker the root of all our other obedience. We breathe habitually an unwholesome air, which, however feebly it may seem to operate, will, in time, sap the constitution, corrode the vitals, and corrupt the heart.

Another qualification of Obedience is Perseverance, that we be *steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.* Proceed we secondly,

II. To contemplate the beauty of the divine portrait of Charity as it springs out of the precepts of the Gospel, and its tendency to elevate and refine our nature.

Though, from its sublime and extensive genius, it may wear, at a distant view, a
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forbidding aspect; yet, on a more familiar converse, its apparent austerity will soften into charms, and it will appear invested in native beauty and humility, all gracious, lovely, and benign. Our Saviour invites us to advance in confidence, and to taste this fountain of virtue, the purity and sweetness of whose waters will soon wash away every difficulty, and administer a cure to every disease. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall receive rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burthen is light.* He has not loaded our duty with a number of painful and unprofitable ceremonies, like those of the Jews. His precepts are what our rightest reason embraces and approves, and they inspire that universal love, which is the sweetest ingredient we can infuse into the cup of life. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb.*

And, since it is fixed by an unchangeable decree, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, at the same time that Charity enables its votaries to tread the path of life in the courts of peace and pleasantness, it purifies and improves them in those heavenly rudiments, which are the seeds of their future happiness, and which will ripen to perfection in the world of angels. In this it eclipses the merit of every other virtue and endowment; for, whilst they spring only from the head to flatter the pride of the understanding, it dwells in the heart, satisfies the conscience, and improves the soul. It transcends all earthly powers, even those miraculous ones vouchsafed to men, by the supernatural effusions of the Holy Ghost, to confirm and to plant the religion of Jesus. *To one was given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecies, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But covet earnestly the best of gifts,—and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.—Though I speak with the*

the tongue of men and of angels, and have no charity, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. And though I give all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burnt, and have no charity, it profiteth me nothing. It is the pure principle of Charity alone, that can refine the soul, entitle it to heaven, and make it happy there. Other virtues and endowments, the virgins that be her fellows may bear her company, but she is the queen of heaven all glorious within, her raiment is of needle-work, and her cloathing of wrought gold.

Her picture is drawn by the expressive pencil of St. Paul, and it may be both a pleasing and an useful speculation to trace its characteristic features. *Charity suffereth long and is kind.* Patience and forbearance are her leading qualities. Her demeanour is mild and courteous; she delights to render good for evil, and to diffuse kindness and forgiveness through the universe. *Charity envieth not:*

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Where love flourishes in perfection, it kills the seeds of envy. *Charity vaunteth not herself, is not puffed up:* Every species of pride, every feature of arrogance is foreign to her nature. No man rises above another in the scale of her estimation, but by the goodness of his heart and the measure of his love. *Doth not behave herself unseemly.* She is of mild and affable address. Her general benevolence, her humble spirit, her gentle deportment, her unfeigned good-nature, her earnest desire to soften every care, to alleviate every pain, and to make all around her happy, are the true characteristics of good breeding. She breathes a native unaffected love. By her easy manners and humane attentions, she wins every heart, conciliates every affection, and creates an interest in every breast. But this genuine politeness is neither that passive compliance, nor that servile courtesy, the one spurious and the other counterfeit, which are current in the world, and would usurp its name. It springs from the basis of virtuous and manly principle, and flows spontaneously from the heart. It is not subject to the airy delusions of
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of caprice and fashion, nor tied down to the ceremonious observances of complaisance. It is uniform, unchangeable, and free, as its parent principle. It is the generous and sincere production of the soil of Paradise, not the fawning offspring of the provinces of France. *Seeketh not her own*: Self-love fixt on improper objects is itself a vice, and the root of many vices; but Charity loveth her neighbour as herself, and studies his advantage in conjunction with her own. *Is not easily provoked*: Her resentment is suppressed and smothered by her love. *Thinketh no evil*. A stranger to malice and detraction, she meditates no ill. *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*. She has no delight in ill-report, which is often false, and always aggravated, but rejoices when truth steps forward to contradict it. *Covereth all things*: Taking no pleasure in the faults and miscarriages of others, she stops the busy mouth of slander. *Believeth all things*: And, expecting that goodness abroad which she feels at home, she is willing to believe all that is good. *Endureth all things*: Love of God and good-will towards men inspire the truest

truest fortitude. They form the hero and the martyr, characters which shine with such conspicuous lustre in the annals of the world.

Such are the features of this celestial virtue as they are delineated by the masterly hand of Paul ; and, to crown this portrait of beauty, he adds, that *Charity never faileth. But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail : In time they will be fulfilled ; and our knowledge, in another life, may extend to future events, as well as to the past and present. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease : We shall have no occasion, in a future existence, for the medium of human language to communicate our thoughts. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away : The diminutive portions and degrees of it, which constitute human learning, and by which one man excels another, will be swallowed up in general intuition. For, now, we know in part, and we prophecy in part ; but, hereafter, when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away, and we shall all possess the whole. When I was a child, I spake, understood, and thought as a child ; but, when I became a man, I put away*

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away childish things. We are now in our minority, and must rest content in that contracted sphere, till the day of maturity arrive, when our ideas and sentiments will be heightened and enlarged. *Now we see through a glass darkly:* The hand of Providence hath drawn a veil over immortal objects, lest they should dazzle and mislead our mortal eyes. *But, then, we shall see face to face:* When the curtain drops, the veil will be removed, and the heavenly scene will be displayed to view. Now, *I know in part, but, then, I shall know, even as I am known:* And we shall have free access to the exhaustless fountains of the knowledge of God.—All these gifts are temporal, and, however useful to men in this world, they are only bestowed as instruments to prepare them for the next, and will perish with them. Faith will be lost in certainty, and Hope in enjoyment. *But, Charity never faileth.* After she has adorned and beautified the life of a good man here, she will never leave him, nor forsake him. Her existence will extend beyond this visible scene, and when the celestial mansions are displayed, he will view her the glorious

inhabitant, who will receive him to her bosom, and crown him with her love. Though she has deigned to visit the earth, she has her origin, and will have her consummation, in heaven. She is of the divine and eternal essence. *God is Love.* And the felicity of heaven will be the perfection of love. *And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity; but the greatest of these is Charity.*

Reason and Conscience lead to the knowledge of this virtue, but through a dark and bewildered road; for how doubtful and embarrassed were the morality and boasted learning of the heathen philosophers? But, *when the day-spring from on high visited the earth, when the light of righteousness shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness was risen upon us,* the cloud which had envelopped the moral hemisphere immediately dispersed, and the bright ray of the Gospel beamed into the hearts of men, displaying Christian Charity in her native colours. Reason and Conscience were astonished, and convinced. They acknowledge with reverence her sublime construction. They pay homage to her eternal excellence. They honour, they adore
her.

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her. They bear witness that she is of divine extraction, that she came down from heaven, and that He, who brought her with him, could be no other than the SON OF GOD.

Hail, heaven-descended Virtue ! To thee, O Charity ! we are indebted for all the genuine happiness that is capable to reside on earth. By thee our affections are refined, our hearts are spiritualized, our souls are sublimed from the pollution of earth to the purity of heaven. Reason surveys thee with admiration. Religion embraces thee as her divinest offspring. And human Nature exults in triumph that thou hast condescended to visit, and adorn her. Whilst he resides here, thou teachest man the rudiments of his future existence, and attendest him into that distant country, from whence there is no return, where love unbounded reigns !

HERE let us reflect how admirably all the Precepts of the Gospel conspire, to promote the great end of religion. Those which relate to God, inform us that *he is a Spirit, and is to be worshipped in spirit, and in truth* ; those which relate to Ourselves, prepare us

for his celestial habitation, as a place of spiritual, and unmixed enjoyments; those, which relate to our Neighbours, prepare us for it, as the sacred abode, in which love, peace and harmony for ever dwell.

The third proposition was to rectify some mistakes relating to the use and practicability of Good Works.

III. Charity, however exalted, is unable, by its own power, to invest fallen man in the possession of immortal life. Though the Obedience enjoined by the Gospel be nearly allied to the original law given to Adam, which, in his state of innocence, immediately entitled him to happiness; for *to him that worketh, the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt*; yet we are ever to remember, that, since the robe of innocence was removed, *though the law be holy, and the commandment holy, just and good, yet we are carnal sold under sin*, and divested of the power to fulfil it. We must ever look up to the Merits of the immaculate Jesus as the fundamental means of our salvation, and consider our Obedience grounded on Faith as the subordinate

subordinate but indispensable, condition, by which we shall be entitled to that *eternal life, which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly; his faith joined to his sincere though imperfect obedience, is counted for righteousness.*

Solicitous for the welfare of his son, an affectionate parent gives him a fair inheritance. The son, regardless of his admonitions, squanders the donation by prodigal intemperance. He sells it, and is reduced to the most distressful penury. The father, wrung with parental feeling to see his starving condition, buys the estate for him, and pays down the price of money; but interdicts him from possessing it, till he has given a proof of his good conduct and reformation. His *good conduct and reformation*, therefore become the *condition*, on which he is to re-enjoy his inheritance. They could not regain it themselves. No: It was bought by the father's money; and they are only the secondary and subordinate, though indispensable, means of obtaining it, for it will be of no use that the father purchased, unless the son adopt this method
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to come into possession. If the latter abandon the condition, will not the former be justifiable in turning his back and leaving him to starve?—This is no unfit image of the dispensation of heaven towards men. In this situation do we stand in respect of happiness; for unless we approve our diligence and sincerity in discharging the Christian Condition, we shall forfeit the *prize of our high calling*. Though Obedience cannot purchase heaven itself, though it have not the merits of a Saviour; yet it is the appointed channel through which the blood of that Saviour must flow unto us. So admirably is the plan of redemption constructed, that though all, in the first place, depends on Christ, all, in the second place, depends on us; and, in proportion as we apply our efforts in working out our salvation, we shall appropriate to ourselves the inestimable reward.

But, as some too confidently presume upon their own independent virtue; so others have been weak enough to doubt, whether they are *capable* of virtue or goodness at all. *Good* in the language of Scripture is used in

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two different acceptations, and the want of a just distinction has been sometimes the unhappy occasion of ill-grounded diffidence and despair. God alone is good and his will alone is perfect. This goodness and perfection are *absolute*, and if we understand them in this superlative sense, we are incapable of them in the last degree: *There is none that doeth good, no not one.* Good Master! says one to our Saviour, *what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?* And he said, *Why callest thou me good?* *There is none good but one, that is God;—but, if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* At the same time that our Lord rebukes the disciple for calling him *good*, it is remarkable that he answers his question *What good thing shall I do?* by injoining him to *keep the commandments.* This *good* is, therefore, different from the other, and though immensely inferior, may with full propriety be called *good*, as the Saviour informed his interrogant, that it was the way to *enter into life.* This *good* as adapted to the abilities of men is the duty of Obedience in contemplation, and may be called *conditional good*; and *good,*
indeed,

indeed, it is justly named, for without this imperfect conditional good, we shall never come at that which is absolute and perfect, the presence of God, and the happiness of his abode.

May that Omniscent Omnipresent Being, under whose universal superintending eye all our actions move, and which pierceth the inmost thoughts, direct and assist us in the work of obedience, that we may regulate our conduct by that great model of perfection which was once exhibited on earth, and that our lives may redound to his glory and our own salvation? *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city.*

DISCOURSE VII.

On REPENTANCE.

Acts iii. 19.

*Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that
your sins may be blotted out.*

WHATEVER progress we may make
in the virtues of Faith and Obedi-
ence, whilst we sojourn below, we shall be
subject to the effects of that infirmity which
is inseparable from a mortal nature. Though
the Saviour hath not admitted us to a state
of absolute purity in this life, but hath re-
served it as the reward of our services in the
next; yet as sin militates directly against
the nature and end of his religion, he hath

injoined us to renounce and to repent of it, though unable entirely to break its yoke. This REPENTANCE constitutes a third part of the Condition of the Covenant of Grace, through which we shall be pardoned, approved, and adopted of God. We will, first consider the *nature* and *offices* of this virtue; and, then, endeavour to guard it from the effect of such *errors*, as the ignorance of the weak, and the artifice of the wicked have fastened upon it.

I. WE commit sin, because it gratifies our affections, because we love it. *In the heart it reigns over our mortal bodies.* Could we turn our affections totally against it, we should pursue an effectual step to annihilate its power. As the heart is also the seat in which the pure religion of Jesus must be enthroned, by commanding us to repent, he hath availed himself of its passions, and affections, its wishes and desires, its sorrow and indignation, and every powerful spring, and retained them on our side in the spiritual conflict with sin. If we consider its infernal nature, if we reflect on Him whose will it violates,

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If we view its pernicious consequences in relation to ourselves, we shall have reason, and may have power, to hate it in a high degree. Such is the natural tendency of Repentance instituted for the express purpose of *disarming Sin, and quenching the fiery darts of the devil.*

When the Baptist came to prepare the world for the reception of its Redeemer, he opened his commission by preaching *the Baptism of repentance for the remission of Sins.* And as the business of Christ was to extirpate sin, and to plant a religion in purity and mercy, no medicine could be prescribed so effectual to prepare the hearts of men for his reception. *Repent, says he, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand—*‘The Messiah is coming in his appointed time, to deliver the world from the tyranny of Sin and Death, and to erect his kingdom of Righteousness and Immortality; prepare yourselves by forsaking sin that ye may be initiated into the glorious privileges of that kingdom’. With the same words the Saviour, when he assumed his ministerial character, introduced himself publicly to the world; and, after his resurrection, his Apostles insisted on the same

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condition commanding all men every where to repent.

But as the preparation of the heart is the first, so its purification is the last, office of religion. To strive against sin our vital enemy, to preserve every spring of the heart untainted by its pollutions, and to guard every avenue from its attacks, is the proper business of our Christian warfare; and we cannot retain so powerful an advocate, or so faithful an ally in our constant service, as a cautious and penitential conduct. Sin and Righteousness, having a direct tendency to exterminate each other, are incapable of flourishing in the same soil. Nothing can so effectually eradicate the former out of the breast, emancipate the affections from its dominion, and prepare the heart for the reception, or preserve it pure for the accommodation, of religion, as the expedient of Repentance. When our foot has strayed into the path of vice, it brings us back with a friendly check, and conducts us safely in the road of virtue. By it, the flagrant offender can erase his name out of the book of perdition, whilst the Saint can add life to his

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his devotion, and vigor to his faith. So excellent is the NATURE of this virtue, so powerful an advocate at the throne of heaven, so useful an associate to Faith and Obedience, that it is not unfrequently used in scripture as including them both in its signification, and as such, claims the reward of religion to itself—*Pardon and Repentance, Repentance and Remission of Sins* are found connected in several parts of the sacred volume, which informs us that *by Repentance Faith is made perfect*. Let us trace the progress of this great reformer of human conduct.

REPENTANCE is, in the end, such a virtuous change in the heart, as produces a virtuous change in life and practice. The first office is, therefore, to EXAMINE that heart, to arraign our thoughts at the bar of the Gospel, to call Conscience in witness against them, and to listen to her voice, whilst she judges and condemns. But however indispensable, this duty is difficult and disagreeable. None are willing to know, much less to own, their faults. We all endeavour to hide them from others, and too often from ourselves.

selves. Self-love, that idol of the soul, is an inveterate enemy to self-examination. Our pride is wounded by reflecting on our infirmities, and the pain they give makes us turn our eyes to the fairer side of our character, draw over it an illusive veil, and contemplate the deceit with kind indulgence. We look upon our vices as upon our children with an eye of fondness, *proclaiming peace, where there is no peace.* Yet the duty is important. *Judge, that ye be not judged of the Lord.* And even when we are best disposed to judge, we should carefully guard against self-delusion, for *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*

The next office of Repentance, is SORROW and DETESTATION in proportion to the size and complexion of our vices. This is a hearty, a sincere, an unfeigned concern for the repeated violation of His divine will, who sustains the awful character of our great Creator, our tender Father, our merciful Redeemer, and our daily Benefactor, accompanied with that humility and confusion, which become weak, dependent, sinful creatures. No sudden bursts of sorrow, no fluctuating

tuating impulse, no desultory affection, no momentary tear will do the business. It must be a steady, sober, heart-felt contrition springing from a deep sense of our sins, the dignity and goodness of the Offended, his love and anger, and the unrelenting vengeance of his arm. Sorrow thus grounded and conducted will operate in our hearts, and distinguish itself in our lives. It will eradicate every poisonous weed, and make virtue to flourish in the breast, like a tree that is planted by the river, under the smiles of approving heaven. It will make the heart pure as incense burnt upon the altar, and will render it a sacrifice acceptable unto God, through the purer and more valuable sacrifice of his Son. *The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God! thou wilt not despise. Turn ye to me, saith the Lord, with all your heart, with fasting and with weeping, and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God.*

But let us not, in this important business, rely on the pillars of our own strength, nor place the last confidence in our human powers. It is the work of Omniscience alone

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to explore the heart, to penetrate into its recesses, and to unfold its inmost retreats. The seeds of vice, which ambush in our vitals, will undermine the foundations, whilst either the enchanting gale of fortune, or the bitter storm of adversity will shake the pillars of the edifice of repentance, which is merely of our own erecting. Both the ground-work of this, and of every other virtue, should be laid, and the superstructure conducted, by the hand of Him, who is the beginner and finisher of every good work. *Try me, O God! and seek the ground of my heart. Prove and examine my thoughts. Look well if there is any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!* With such humble and fervent aspirations let us frequently solicit the ears of the most High. Our endeavours will be effectual through his assistance, our contrition will be sincere, and our sighs and prayers will ascend before him as a complete and welcome offering. *Let us prepare our hearts, and stretch out our hands towards him, if iniquity be in our hands, let us put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in our tabernacles,*

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II. Let us, next, endeavour to combat the prevalence of such MISTAKES, as tend to sap the foundation of this virtue, and to overturn its use.

I. And we must, first, correct an error too liable to fix on such minds as are either apt to despair of reaping the benefit of Repentance, because they do not feel that agonizing sting which they deem its sole criterion; or on such, as too presumptuously fix the date of their *new birth*, and inviolable acceptance, from some instantaneous and preternatural pang, without any regard to their future conduct.

The validity of Repentance is not to be estimated from the degree of sorrow it occasions, which depends chiefly on the natural *temper* or particular *state* of the penitent, and does not enter into the intrinsic nature of the duty.—Men differ as widely in the frame of their minds, as in the cast of their features; and each particular temper is known to have a powerful ascendant over all the affections, hope or fear, joy or sorrow, love or hatred. In some dispositions they glow with greater

vehemence than in others ; they are warmer, though, perhaps, no more sincere ; though more obvious to the eye, they are, perhaps, no more abundant in the heart. Though his breast may not be torn with the same apparent remorse, nor the sigh heave with the same violence of grief, that another might feel on a similar occasion ; yet the bosom of the penitent may conceal a more sober contrition no less acceptable to Him, who weigheth the inmost thoughts.—The particular state of the reformer will also influence the degree of his affection. When the hardened sinner, who hath immersed his conscience in the dregs of guilt, is awakened from his fatal insensibility, whilst he reflects on the immense danger of his situation, his late obduracy, and *the great love and terror of the Lord*, how can he escape being wrung with the severest anguish ? And since it is out of the power of lenient medicines to restore the inveterate state of his moral and religious constitution to its proper tone, it is highly necessary he should drink the bitterest cup. Were his chastisements slight, his resolutions would be transitory ; he would soon relapse
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into the bosom of his late enchantress ; and the effects of his repentance would vanish as a morning cloud. But, however expedient that some offenders should be softened by more pungent agonies, the state of many, we presume, is such, that a milder emollient of grief will heal the wounds of conscience, if it only be sincere. Their own virtuous propensity, under the influence of heaven, restrain some from crimes of a deeper stain, and, after some slighter misconducts, in the silent hour of reflection, they easily relent, and are drawn back by the cords of love into the peaceful road of virtue. And, we may humbly trust, many still remain, who, with the same virtuous propensity, and from the advantage of being trained up under the happy auspice of pious example, persevere to the latest verge of life in an uniform and unbroken strain of duty and religion.

Nor, whilst the diffident is despairing without a cause, let the enthusiast presume too boldly upon his sudden and preternatural pang unaccompanied in his life. Amendment is the end, to which Repentance is appointed as the means, and from the acquisition

of the end alone, the means employed receive their value. The text enjoins, not only *to repent*, but *to be converted* too; and unless they produce a determined resolution to relinquish the sins of which we would repent, all sorrow, and humiliation, and contrition will be of no avail. *Be not, therefore, deceived, he that doeth righteousness is only righteous, and will only be accepted of Him, whose name is Righteousness.*

Of the use and validity of Repentance no conclusion can be drawn either from the gentle or severe, or from the gradual or sudden, affection which it produces; but there is a criterion by which, and by which alone, its worth can be weighed and ascertained: This is, Whether our sorrow, of whatever kind, *bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*

2. AND, if the end of Repentance display itself in a life conducted in the sacred road of virtue and religion, how fatally are they deceived, who would lull themselves and others into a dangerous security, by the air-built notion, that, however vicious their lives and conduct, a *Death-bed Repentance* will
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wipe off every stain, and administer a cure to every wound ! who indulge aggravated and habitual sin, under the feeble presumption, that a few sighs, and tears, and prayers sent up with their latest breath, will soften the ears of the Almighty, and open the gates of heaven, encouraged by the example of the Penitent, whom our Lord forgave upon the cross, saying, *this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise !*

Admitting, for a moment, the validity of this plea, and that repentance at the latest verge of life would cancel every fault, yet how inconceivably improvident to risque an immortal soul on so hazardous a die ! Human life hangs on a feeble thread, *Thou fool ! this night, this hour, this moment, thy soul may be required of thee.* Alas ! this pretence has no possible foundation but in the artifice of the devil, upon which they, who are wedded with intemperate fondness to their vices, build an imaginary bulwark to screen themselves from their own inspection, whilst they riot amongst them in security and ease. Let us, therefore, employ a friendly hand to remove the specious veil,
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which covers the danger and deformity of this fatal plea.

“ When the Saviour conferred pardon on the Penitent of the cross, he did not propose him as a subject for the imitation of future ages. This extraordinary character was introduced in the most august and bloody scene ever displayed upon the theatre of the world, for other purposes—that his faith labouring under the most disadvantageous circumstances might be a public and final reproof of the wilful blindness and infidelity of the Jews, and rise in open condemnation against them—and, to present Christ with an opportunity of exercising that regal power, with which his executioners had just invested him, by publicly forgiving sins, and by conferring the reward of immortality.

But we are not sure that this man's repentance was so sudden or so short, as some are hasty to imagine. We know that he had been a malefactor, and was under sentence of death, but are left unacquainted both of the nature of his crime, and of the length of his confinement. We know too, that, by the inveteracy of the Jews, the Lord of righteousness

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business was condemned, and crucified in that very hour; and, perhaps, the crime of his fellow-sufferer was not of the deepest dye; it might have been perpetrated long before the date of his commitment; after that, he might lie a considerable time in prison, which is no bad school for repentance, and between his trial and his suffering a considerable space might intervene; so that he might have been seated on the stool of sorrow for weeks, or months, or years, and have constructed his life on a new and virtuous plan.

The case of the Penitent seems to be distinguished by these auspicious marks, for we know from scripture, that at his death he behaved in a most exemplary manner. Reposing all his faith and confidence in Christ, as the promised Messiah, he was, perhaps, the first man who discovered the glories of his spiritual kingdom, *Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom!* At this moment his Apostles believed him to be only a temporary king, and, after his crucifixion, their hopes were blasted, they despaired and fled. Was not, then, this man's discernment extraordinary

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traordinary and his faith heroic? But how did he arrive at this great discovery?—By a careful and accurate examination of the Scriptures, by comparing predictions with events, by weighing the character of the Messiah as delineated by the Prophets against the miracles, doctrines, person, and sufferings, of Christ. All this was most probably done after the commission of his crime; and, if he had leisure to canvass and compare the evidences so as to arrive at a just conclusion in an investigation so intricate and extensive, he had, surely, leisure to repent.

Such is, probably, the character of the Penitent of the cross, and shall sinners of every age induce the hope of pardon from his example? No: If they will have him for an example, let them imitate his virtue, his piety, and his faith, and, at the hour of death, let them emulate his humble petition, *Lord remember me!* his fervent hope, and dying confidence.

BUT, let us take this question upon different ground. Let us suppose that the Penitent knew nothing of him only by the me-
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medium of common fame, and that the meekness and patience; the piety and charity, the divine and glorious magnanimity; of Jesus *led to the slaughter; as a lamb that is dumb; and that openeth not his mouth,* had struck him with conviction, that he was the Saviour of the world—Let us suppose, that, through the cloud of shame and sufferings, he discerned the glory of the Son of God, and improved the happy opportunity to his own advantage—does not this indicate that his head was open to the first means of conviction, and his heart to the first overtures of Grace, and that he wanted only the opportunity of professing his faith before. And how noble and magnanimous was that faith! In that awful and important hour, when the Son of God was finishing his work upon the cross; when he was submitting to the power of darkness, and of that world which had rejected him, and for which he bled; when his enemies were mocking and insulting him; when one of his bosom friends, whom he had chosen to himself, had betrayed, another had denied, and all deserted, him; and when the Penitent's un-

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relenting brother on the other side was loading him with bitter invective, in such an hour, whilst he was oppressed with the agonies of death and seemingly forsaken by his heavenly Father, to proclaim his innocence aloud, to acknowledge him for the Son of God and the Saviour of men, and to repose his dying hopes in his spiritual kingdom, was a confession so peculiarly circumstanced, and so singularly heroic, as to eclipse the expiring glory of every other martyr. And can we wonder that the unparalleled excellence of his faith, the clearness of his discerning eye, the frankness of his avowal, and the fervency of his dying prayer should affect the mind of the Omniscient Jesus, to whom belongeth the forgiveness of sins, for which he was atoning in that very hour?

“ With what colour of reason”, says a venerable Father, * “ can a death-bed Penitent draw this example into a precedent? For what shadow of resemblance can subsist between one, who laid himself open to the first impressions of Grace and immediately produced the most illustrious fruits; and another, who has wilfully shut his

* St. Chrysostom,

“ eyes

“ eyes against the light, and stealed his heart against repeated methods of conviction ?” No characters can, indeed, be more dissimilar, none more opposite. The Penitent of the Cross enjoyed a short, but an extraordinary, opportunity, which he improved to the most glorious advantage; the death-bed Penitent hath had a long and a gracious one offered him in vain. From the hour of his birth the principle of Grace hath shed its influence upon him, as upon a piece of torpid clay, incapable of reflection. He hath either openly disavowed the Lord that bought him, or lived in opposition to the principles of his belief; and how can he, whose life, under the resplendent light of the Gospel, has been a continued scene of disobedience, expect to be pardoned and rewarded for an hour’s contrition, which is contrary to the inclination of his heart, and forced upon him by the prospect of immediate death armed with a shaft of terror.

Should any one, however, defer repenting to the latest instant, in that critical moment let him not fail to send up his most fervent prayers, and to redouble his endeavours;

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and we may ground a charitable hope, for his God is merciful, and it is possible his repentance may be sincere. But of this He alone can judge, who is the *searcher of hearts*, and who can only know whether his contrition would produce a virtuous practice, should his health be re-established and his life prolonged. Without this singular, and indeed improbable, qualification, neither reason nor scripture authorize us to believe that his pardon is sealed. Alas, this is a dubious and perplexing state! Would you be certain that your repentance will be available?—Repent early, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and then you may rest in safety; for a life of piety and virtue, or Christian principles shining out in Christian charity, are the only infallible credentials by which man can be admitted to an immortality in glory.

We have, now, had a concise view of the several parts of the Condition of the Covenant of Grace. By the combined efforts of Faith, Obedience, and Repentance sincerely and religiously exerted, through the merits and
mediat-

mediation of *Another*, we may be said to fulfil all righteousness and to be perfect as God is perfect; because not only our natural infirmities will be forgiven, but also our voluntary sins will be blotted out, and we shall be permitted to appear before him, as holy, unblameable, and irreproveable in his sight, being justified freely by his Grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins; that he might be just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.

DISCOURSE VIII,

Of the GIFTS and GRACES of the
HOLY GHOST.

JOHN xiv. 16.

*I will pray the Father, and he shall give you
 another Comforter, that he may abide
 with you for ever,*

WHEN the Author of our Salvation,
 had finished the several periods of
 his work on earth, and was ascended into the
 heavenly places to appear before God with his own
 blood, as the High-priest of our profession, he sent
 down the HOLY GHOST, in consequence
 of a promise given to his Disciples just before
 his final exit: *I will pray the Father, and he
 shall give you another Comforter, that he may
 abide with you for ever,*

The

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The first office of this divine messenger was, to supply the loss of his personal presence, and to carry his immortal plan to its full perfection. Before his departure, he had ordained the Apostles to be his witnesses and envoys by a positive command, and now *their understandings were fully opened*, they were actually commissioned and equipped for the important work, by the plentiful effusions of his Spirit. To confirm his Doctrines they were endued with *Miracles*, with the *Spirit of Prophecy*, and with the *Power of God*; to disseminate these Doctrines immediately among different nations, they were inspired with the gift of *Languages*; and to enable them to deliver a Gospel exempt from fallibility and error, which was to be held up as the standard of the Christian institution to all future ages, their minds were illumined with the word of *Wisdom and Knowledge*. Such were the extraordinary *Gifts* of the Holy Ghost poured out upon the first ministers of the Gospel, and which continued till the ends were accomplished, for which they were bestowed, till the Doctrines were confirmed, the Gospel propagated, and the Religion established.

established. They were then withdrawn, and, being no longer useful, have ceased for many ages.

But because these extraordinary gifts have long time disappeared, we are not to conclude, that the Holy Spirit hath deserted the earth and abandoned human nature. No: He still preserves and protects the Church by his general influence, and inspires its members with his assisting GRACES, enabling them to perform the duties of religion; and we have the promise of our Saviour, that, by him, *he himself will be with us to the end of the world.* Let us, first, consider the *certainty* and *use* of his operations on the hearts of men; and how they are to be *improved*: and, in the second place, guard this important doctrine against some vulgar *misconceptions*.

I. That a divine and sanctifying principle is communicated from above, which operates upon the mind, enlightens the understanding, influences the will, purifies the affections, elevates the heart, invigorates the springs of action and the elements of life, enabling us to discharge our religious duty in all its numerous

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numerous and extensive branches, is a truth established on the authority of innumerable passages of sacred writ. *Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.**

Here the Holy Ghost is raised to a level with the Saviour of the world in the purification, the sanctification, and the justification, of men.

And, if he weigh the arduous nature of his duty, what he is required to perform, and indispensably required, the Christian will acknowledge with reverence and gratitude the use and importance of this adventitious aid derived from the invisible fountain of power and holiness. If he survey the difficulty of the work, and then view the fabric of his moral constitution in its deformed and shattered state, he will give it in as totally insufficient, and will plead the necessity of its being repaired and moulded anew by that omnipotent hand, by which it was first erected. When he reflects on the commands and prohibitions of the Gospel, and on the urgent necessity of practising every duty and forsaking every sin; when he views the

* 1. Cor. vi. ii,

numerous obstacles which thwart his road to virtue, and the many temptations which solicit his propensity to vice; when he feels the tide of passion rushing impetuously on and overturning the barriers of reason; when he compares the power of present and sensible objects to affect him, with the faint impressions made by those which are absent and spiritual; when he marks the unequal contest between time and eternity in attaching his affections, how will he be convinced, that *he is not sufficient to think or to do any thing as of himself, but that by the Spirit he must subdue the deeds of the body?*

Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of light; for with him is the fountain of life, and in his light we shall see light. Whilst by the mercies of a gracious dispensation, our past offences are blotted out, we are supported by the staff of unerring wisdom against future sins; and it is not the meanest privilege of the Christian institution, that it places its votaries under the influence of a spiritual and infallible Director, under whose auspicious eye they live and move, and who guides every

every thought and action to a joyful issue. *All our sufficiency is of God, who by his Spirit maketh us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight.* He opens and assists the mind to discern the beauty of Religion and *what are the riches of his inheritance.* He presents her to the intellectual eye as an object all glorious within, and *whose vesture is of wrought gold.* He captivates the will to embrace and to adore her, and gives power to the heart to perform all her pleasure. He raises the affections to the pavillion of her celestial abode, and *enlightens our understandings that we sleep not in death.* By nature we are *conceived in sin*, and the end of our natural life is death. By Grace we are said to be *born of God*, never to die. Nor may this mode of speaking be considered as entirely figurative; for since by his Spirit he communicates his nature, that is, his holiness, unto us, we may be said with just propriety to be *born of him.* We are likewise said to be *created anew*, and to be *born again*, and since we have a new principle instilled into us, which will shoot out into the extent of an

endless life, significantly are these expressions used. A change is effected in the moral system from darkness to light, from carnal to spiritual, from sin to righteousness. The divine image, which was effaced in our first Parents by sin, will be repaired by Grace, and being made partakers of the divine nature, we shall be meet to become partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.

And He, who hath ascended up on high, who hath led captivity captive, and giveth gifts to men, appeareth in the presence of God for us, pleading in our behalf the merits of his blood; presenting our prayers for the supply of our wants, and making intercession for us at the right hand of God. Having, therefore, such a high-priest over the house of God, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of Grace, to approach towards Him who is inshrined in inaccessible light, and to taste of the water of the river which proceeds out of the throne, and to find grace and help in time of need.

How conspicuously important is the function of the Holy Ghost! As man cannot be saved
but

but by the merits and sacrifice of Jesus, so only through the channel of Grace enabling him to discharge his religious obligation, can the effects of these merits and the blood of that sacrifice flow unto him. He can contribute neither to the first, nor to the second work of his redemption. They both spring from the goodness, and redound to the glory, of God. *Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith unto his Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God.*

Is, then, the business of redemption brought to its final issue without our concurrence? Is the divine fabric reared without lending our assisting hand? By no means: The foundation is laid by our Redeemer, the superstructure is raised by our Sanctifier, but the edifice remains to be compleated by Ourselves.

When the Almighty promised the ancient Jews the aid of his supernatural agency, *A new heart and a new spirit will I put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; it is wor-*
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thy of remark, that, by the same Prophet * and in similar words, he requires them *To make themselves a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel!* How does this inculcate the necessity of seconding and IMPROVING the operations of the spiritual agent, and of cherishing his emotions by a diligent attention to the integrity of our lives and the propriety of our conduct? He who *supplieth seed to the sower and bread to the eater by sending rain and fruitful seasons,* is also the dispenser of Grace, and *poureth out his Spirit on all flesh*; but, as, in the former case, unless we exert our own industry in tilling, plowing, and sowing, in vain shall we expect *our hearts, will be filled with joy and gladness*, so, in the latter, unless we earnestly cultivate the seeds of Grace which are sown in our hearts, in vain shall we hope that they will ripen into the fruits of joy and peace. The dispensation of Grace is a distribution of *ten talents given freely to every man to profit withal*; but the question remains, How do we apply, or what use do we make of, them? If we improve them, we shall reap the fruits of them and of their increase. If we neglect or abuse

* Ezekiel,

them,

them, they will be removed from us, and we shall forfeit all their advantages. All finally depends upon *Ourselves*. If we labour abundantly, we shall receive abundantly; if we scatter sparingly, we shall gather sparingly; if we plentifully sow, we shall plentifully reap. *Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints!*

We are all endued with sufficient power to discharge our reasonable and religious duties, only it is not inherent by nature, but is communicated from the eternal fountain of happiness and life. The exercise of the understanding, the freedom of the will, and the exertion of our endeavours are no way dismantled or abridged by the principle of Grace, which is, on the contrary, to be improved by the exertion of these natural powers. And as this celestial donation may evince the infinite importance of that salvation for which it is bestowed, so it should suggest the strongest motives to strain every nerve in its cultivation. *Work out your salvation*, says an Apostle, *with fear and trembling, with the greatest humility and care; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to*
do,

do, of his good pleasure, And the scriptures denounce the high displeasure of heaven against those, who reject its overtures and despise its mercies. Of how sore punishment suppose ye, shall we be thought worthy, if we tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the Covenant wherewith he is consecrated an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace?—Put off, therefore concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

II. To obviate the errors of those warm imaginations, which are liable to misapprehend, and of those gloomy dispositions, which are apt to despair of the influence of the Spirit, let us recur to the distinction already made between the common and ordinary, and the peculiar and extraordinary, operations of the Spirit.

The former were dispensed for the purpose of planting and propagating the Christian Religion. Thus holy men of old spake as they were

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were moved by the Holy Ghost, testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. When he made his appearance, on him the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon him, and filled him with the Holy Ghost: By that Spirit he cast out devils, and, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God. After his ascension, it was shed abundantly on his Apostles; To one was given by the Spirit the word of wisdom and knowledge, to another working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another divers kinds of tongues; but all these wrought the self same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he would. These operations are distinguished by the name of Inspiration, which it is in vain to hope for in these enlightened ages, and they, who would pretend to it, are either possessed of a lying Spirit, or else substitute in its place the wild insatiation of a distempered brain.

The other kind of supernatural aid, which hath obtained the appellation of Grace, though it flows from the same Spirit, is very different in its operations and effects, because it differs in its end and use, which are to prepare the hearts of Christians in

every age for that *kingdom* of the Gospel, *which will have no end*. Its office is to help, to strengthen, and to support, us, by adapting itself to our ordinary sentiments, and by flowing on and mingling with the stream of life. It works no sudden or sensible changes, but infuses itself gradually into our nature and imperceptibly alters the bent of our affections. It insensibly leads us on from virtue to virtue, from knowledge to knowledge, and from grace to grace, *into all wisdom and spiritual understanding, making the path of the just as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day*. We are not, therefore, to despond though we cannot trace its impressions on our hearts, nor wonder if we do not feel when or in what particular manner its influence affects us. Are not all the blessings we enjoy poured down upon us by a superior Providence, yet in so natural a way, as in some measure to conceal the hand from which they come? Cannot He, *whose ways are past finding out*, give us the principles of this second and spiritual life, as he gave us those of our first and natural life, without discovering to us the manner of it? Ignorant of *their*

their essential causes, we behold with wonder the powers of vegetation, the instinctive impulses of animals, and the forces impressed on material substances by an omniscient hand; and why should we expect to be let into the sublimer mysteries of the Spirit of God? The mind as well as the body is subject to innumerable changes without our knowing or attending to their causes. A thousand external objects or internal ideas can break the train of our thoughts, though we are unable to discern how the change is made. "If all these trifles can influence us insensibly, and if the influence of obvious causes is often unnoticed, can it be a question whether we may not be secretly guided by an omnipotent and spiritual director?" As in the ceaseless rotation of affairs innumerable events occur of whose certainty we cannot doubt, though we are either totally ignorant of their occasions or do not remark them, so may the manner of our regeneration remain unperceived. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; even so is every one that is born of the Spirit,*

Inspiration was confined to particular persons, and was partially bestowed ; Grace is general and unconfined. As the occasion of Inspiration was temporary, it was temporary too ; Grace is promised to us and our children for ever. Though Inspiration, in its effects, was calculated to strike more forcibly on the senses, and to excel Grace in outward splendour, yet it falls short in real and intrinsic value ; for, whilst Inspiration is only the means of introducing us into the kingdom of the Gospel here on earth, Grace will entitle us to the crown of that kingdom in heaven. Had the Saints, who were inspired, been devoid of Grace, they might have lamented that ever they were born. They were possessed of both these gifts, and of the latter in a sublime degree ; And let us rejoice that we enjoy the fruits of the one in the sacred records of the bible ; but let us be more exceedingly joyful, if perchance we possess the other in our hearts.

It is this general assistance of the Spirit of regeneration alone which the Scriptures encourage us to expect ; and though we must be content to remain insensible of its immediate influence

influence and particular mode of operation, it is sufficient that by its fruits we know that we enjoy it. *The fruits of the Spirit are in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, hope, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, against which there is no law; and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we have holiness in our lives, we are possessed of an infallible proof that we have the Spirit in our hearts; for into a malicious soul he will not enter, nor dwell in the body which is subject unto sin.*

THE principle of Grace cultivated and improved by every human effort finishes the Christian. *The commandments of God will be his delight, he will imbibe a true sense of the excellence, and relish the divine pleasures of religion. Duty and inclination will go hand in hand, and the war betwixt the law of his members and the law of his mind will cease. His nature will be renewed and carried to the highest point of excellence, of which it is capable here; till He, who hath purged him from sin, shall raise him immaculate from the grave, and complete his happiness in*
glory

glory, which was begun in Obedience and Grace.

O God of my fathers and Lord of Mercy, who hast made all things by thy word, and ordained man through thy wisdom, that he should have dominion over the creatures which thou hast made, give me Wisdom which sitteth by thy throne, and reject me not from among thy children! Wisdom was with thee, which knoweth thy works, and was present with thee when thou madest the world, and knew what was acceptable in thy sight and right in thy commandments. O send her out of thy holy heavens from the throne of thy glory, that being present she may labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing to thee, for she knoweth and understandeth all things, and she shall lead me soberly in my doings and preserve me in her power! So shall my works be acceptable to thee. For what man is he that can know the counsel of God, or who can think what the will of the Lord is, except thou give Wisdom, and send thy holy Spirit from above,

THOUGH the sacred Scriptures give us the plan of Redemption in an indigested form, yet the lines of it are drawn with so much clearness

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clearness and precision, that it is amazing reasonable men, who make them their particular study and their only rule, can differ so widely and so egregiously err in relation to the use and efficacy of the cardinal parts. Salvation is, in the first place the *Gift of God*. This gift is conveyed to men only by the *Merits of Christ*. These merits are only attainable by the joint application of *Faith, Obedience, and Repentance*. These virtues will be ineffectual without the cultivation of *Grace*. So that the gift of God, the Merits of Christ, the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and the endeavours of men, are the four grand links of the Christian chain; and though one be higher than another, yet if any should fail, the whole system of Religion will fall useless to the ground.

If, after the Almighty hath bowed the heavens to give men the clearest information of the terms, by which his eternal councils have decreed to save them, they will blaspheme the light from heaven, and determine, at all events, to be saved in their own way. If some will presumptuously affirm; that by their own Virtue they can com-
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mand salvation, without the merits of a Redeemer—If others will pretend, that his Merits alone are sufficient, and that a bare Faith in him is the whole of Christian duty, rejecting both Obedience and Repentance—If some will split the condition of the Gospel still farther by relying entirely on a death-bed Repentance.—And if others will insist that man is useless and involuntary in the work of his redemption, for that all is done by the irresistible Grace of God——“To all these it is sufficient to say, that they are vain and presumptuous in setting up the opinion and imagination of weak and fallible men against the infallible testimony of persons sent and inspired by God.”

Since, therefore, so many human opinions have been let loose in the world militating against each other, and tending to corrupt the purity, and to defeat the end, of that religion, which is the repository of all our hopes; and since the Oracles of life lie open to the general inspection of mankind, the first duty is to apply our faculties seriously and impartially to learn *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Here it imports us to divest ourselves

of pride, prejudice, singularity, and every evil affection, lest we fail of the heavenly promise through *an evil heart of unbelief*. The next duty is, after establishing our religious principles, to live in conformity to the rule which they prescribe. And here another rock lies in the way of the Christian navigation equally dangerous, and doubly deceitful.—Let us watch every avenue of our conduct, lest we be seduced, through the deceitfulness of sin, from the silent paths of piety and virtue into the public walk of vice, and *hold the faith in unrighteousness*.

THE most prevalent disease impressed upon the heart of man, is a state of his dependence on a superior intelligence. Soon as his faculties begin to open and enlarge, as to reflect upon the objects which present themselves to the mind, he is immediately supplied with the principles of devotion in all its forms. When he surveys the wonders of the material and animal creation: when he views the expanse, the beauty, the order, the

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DISCOURSE IX.

ON PRAYER and the Acts of DIVINE
WORSHIP.

LUKE XV. 13.

*In every thing, by prayer and supplication with
thanksgiving, let your requests be made
known to God.*

THE most prevalent dictate impressed
upon the heart of man, is a sense of his
dependence on a superior Intelligence. Soon
as his faculties begin to open and enlarge, so
as to reflect upon the objects which present
themselves to the mind, he is immediately
inspired with the principles of devotion in all
its forms. When he surveys the wonders of
the material and animal creations; when he
views the grandeur, the beauty, the order,
the

the variety of nature ; when he contemplates the resplendent glory of the heavens ; how is he warmed with the rapturous admiration of the wisdom, and of the power, of God ! And, whilst his intellect is thus delightfully employed, unless it has abandoned that native sensibility so predominant in the human constitution, the heart cannot remain inactive ; it will swell in the ardour of exultation, and rejoice to pay its tribute of *Adoration* and *Praise*. Blest with the divinest faculties of mind and body, created by God as his last and noblest production, possessed of a rational and immortal soul, when he surveys himself, in the midst of such a splendid creation, exalted as the lord and governor of all, to whose use and happiness all administer, and on whom the hand of Providence attends with a more peculiar care, his breast overflows with gratitude, whilst his tongue is employed in offering the willing sacrifice of *Thanksgiving*. When he reflects that all these distinguishing privileges and favours are reached out to him by the hand of Omnipotence itself, and that it is in the discretion of that hand to withdraw itself and be contracted, or to stretch

itself out in more abundance, he will approach the throne of heaven for a continuation and increase of its blessings, by the humble intercession of *Prayer and Supplication*. These expressions and aspirations of the heart are the native and genuine effusions of the soul uninstructed, unprejudiced, unprepossessed. The worship of God, however varied by accident or institution, however corrupted with error or darkened by superstition, however defective, or however rude, is coeval and co-extensive with human nature.

IN compliance with these original impressions the divine Author of our religion, *who knew what was in man*, hath appointed PRAISE, THANKSGIVING, and PRAYER to be the constituent parts of that holy worship, by which he is emboldened to approach towards the mercy-seat of Him, *who is exceedingly glorious, who is clothed with majesty and honour*. And since our progress and success in the virtues of Faith, Obedience, and Repentance, and in every Christian duty, depend on the spiritual supplies afforded to our assistance, we may conceive how important a part

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these acts of devotion, by which we have access to the throne of Grace, sustain in the system of our religion. They are the appointed means of cultivating an intercourse with that heaven, from whence all our power and ability are derived, which will be the reward of our services and the future residence of our souls. Before our Saviour ascended to the bosom of his Father, he revived the drooping hopes of his disciples with this most comfortable and enlivening assurance, *If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it, and I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. And whatsoever ye ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving, is an inspired command, and, to give it a more pointed influence, he hath enforced it by the sanction of his own Example. *In the morning rising up a great while before day, he went into a solitary place and prayed.* Frequently was he found engaged in spiritual intercourse with heaven, and in all the offices of devotion. Though
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he had no sins to confess, no pardon to implore, no wants of Grace to have supplied ; yet how assiduous in paying his voluntary homage to the God of heaven ! His prayers were put up in behalf of men, that his merits might be available in their stead, that their sins might be forgiven through his sacrifice, and that their obedience to his Gospel might crown the illustrious project of his love. How does this example evince the necessity, how enforce the duty, how encourage the practice, of devotion among men !

In addition to his example he hath indulged us with the most divine and perfect form of words, in which we are commanded to offer up our prayers and praises, the sacrifice of our hearts and lips, before the throne of Grace. And, as he is fully acquainted of our indigence, as well as of the disposition of the heavenly Father, the Prayer which he hath dictated, if used in the spirit of devotion, cannot fail of being prevalent and effectual. Ignorant of our own necessities, and more ignorant of the will of Him who only can supply them, had we been left, without the assistance of such a model, to the feeble

feeble efforts of our own invention in the exercise of devotion, we should have been perpetually involved in error and mistake; *but now this confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us, and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

Under the direction of *such a High Priest, who is passed into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us draw near in full assurance of faith, and say, OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.* In this solemn invocation of Almighty God, our Lord hath taught us to call him *Father*, by which we acknowledge him to be the maker of all things, the father of all men, and their perserver by his paternal providence. But as Christians, *whom he hath begotten again to a new and lively hope, and to an incorruptible inheritance,* we can sue for a particular interest in him as a Father; as such, we are emboldened to hope for his pardoning mercy, for *as a father pitieth his own children, even so he hath compassion on those that love him;* as such we are encouraged to expect his supernatural aid, for, *if we being evil know*
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how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? and as such, we are finally assured that we shall receive from him the Spirit of adoption, by which he will give us power to become his sons, and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and coheirs of Christ, in his kingdom of happiness and glory. HALLOWED BE THY NAME. To have a proper sense of the sublime object of religion is of the last importance to our religious conduct; for when we are convinced that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, this will improve every duty, and we shall worship him in the beauty of holiness: Holy and Reverend is his name! THY KINGDOM COME. Here he teaches us to pray that the Kingdom of Righteousness which he hath planted may spread its healing branches throughout the world, that the Gospel may be every where embraced and practised, that the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ. And, in this petition, we extend our devotions beyond the precincts of this world, praying for the approach of that happy period, when there shall be new heavens
and

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and a new earth, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father, and shall reign for ever and ever.

THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. In this petition we pray to be

restored through Christ to that state of purity, in this life, that, in another, we may be *meet to become partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.* GIVE US THIS DAY OUR

DAILY BREAD. Here we solicit that omnipotent Being *who giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater,* to give us the fruits of the earth, in their due season, for the support of our animal life; and, in due season, the emanation of his Grace, for the support of our spiritual life. AND FORGIVE US

OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US. After our warmest efforts to aspire

to heaven, so strong is the bias of our corruption, that we are frequently drawn back into the commission of sin. In this petition we sue for universal forgiveness; and, as the purchaser of it hath appointed *To do to others, as we would, they should do unto us* to be the criterion of his moral law, so, by parity of reason, he enjoins to forgive others, as the

condition of being forgiven by him. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL. The pardon of our sins is one part of our redemption, and the counter-part to it is the virtuous conduct of our future lives. Having, in the last petition sued for pardon, in this, we supplicate the tribunal of Grace to support, to strengthen, and to establish us in the paths of virtue and religion. FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

This inestimable form of prayer, which our Lord hath consecrated to the use of his church, presents us with a compendious outline of the Christian Redemption, and may be considered as a summary of our religion upon the smallest but most perfect scale. In it every act of devotion is exerted; our veneration, our gratitude, our praises and our prayers with united powers assail the gates of heaven, and, if they flow from a sincere and pious heart, they *will take it by violence.*

FROM the high station assigned to Devotion
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by the institution of Christ, descend we to contemplate its native prevalence in laying the foundation, and in supporting the interests, of Religion.

Religion is no useless theory of the head, it has its residence in the heart, which must be prepared by the pure spirit of devotion, before it can securely erect its throne. It is not enough that the mind be enlightened, or that the understanding be convinced, unless the affections be devoted to Heaven, every act of religion will be attempted in vain. That religion is essential to our happiness is obvious to all, but unless she have retained the passions as well as reason, in her service, unless she win us by her charms, unless we love, desire, and adore, we shall never cordially espouse her. That citadel within the breast, in which are kept all the springs that aduate the movements of the soul, must first be taken, before she can safely fix her standard. Devotion must be called in to the aid of reason in laying the foundation of Religion. To loosen our earthly attachments and to give us a relish for purer joys, to raise the affections to the

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sublimest objects, and to cultivate an intercourse with the spiritual world, is the province of devotion. It is to dedicate our hearts and affections to God. Towards him it directs all the emotions of the soul to aspire, and teaches all her wishes and desires to terminate in him. With profoundest veneration we look up to Him, who sitteth in the heavens enshrined in majesty and glory. With hearts overflowing with gratitude we survey ourselves the objects of his care, enriched by his bounty, and redeemed by his love. With humble resignation we repose our confidence in him, committing our souls into his hands. By the exercise of devotion we keep alive in our breasts a sense of our dependence upon him, of reverence for his laws, and of sorrow for our offences against him. By devotion *we love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.* Such is the intercourse which devotion opens with the Deity. Though *he decketh himself with light as with a garment,* it can introduce the humblest mortal to his acquaintance, and in the world, as in a sacred temple, he may
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walk humbly with his God, in the sweet solemnity of gratitude and love. In short, when the principle of devotion is cultivated under the auspice of our Saviour's example, and inspired by the promises of his religion, it elevates the affections above the corruption of our nature, teaching us to breathe after that evangelic state in which all our hopes and wishes centre, and winging all the faculties of the soul in the prosecution of it.

However this angelic virtue may be treated by those, whose hearts have been hardened through the *deceitfulness of sin*, and chained down to its gratifications, as a sullen splenic exercise, which destroys every chearful and enlivening sentiment, which damps every vigorous effort, and checks every joyful ebullition, of the soul, and which excludes the business, as well as prohibits the pleasures of life; they, who have been most conversant with it, and who have a true relish of its joys, know it to be not only the most rational and divine, but the most useful and delectable employment, of their lives. Its first office is to teach us to discharge every duty of life in a sincere and
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honest heart. It invariably inculcates this important lesson, Most effectually do you serve your Maker by doing good to men. And though it prohibit hurtful pleasures, or such a total attachment to those that are innocent, as tends to exclude more important attentions ; yet it indulges in every rational diversion, which may relieve the mind, and qualify it to bear more useful exercises. But it does not only allow us in the virtuous use of the amusements of the world ; it heightens and improves every species of terrestrial delight, and treats us with pleasures of its own of far higher relish and more unfading lustre. From the silent beauties of unadorned creation, from the productions of genius and imagination, and the improvements of art, from philosophical pursuits in all their variety and extent, from the enjoyments of social intercourse, from domestic tranquility and repose, from the soft endearments of family connexions, it raises our affections to the ultimate source from whence these blessings flow. It doubles the sphere of all our enjoyments by crowning our terrestrial pleasures and pursuits with the

sublime

sublime affection of gratitude to heaven. To contemplate the glories and perfections of its inhabitant, to view his image impressed on all his works, to dwell upon his love, his mercy, and his goodness, to repose our trust and hope and confidence in him who is faithfulness and truth, to be conscious that we move under his superintending eye which views and approves our actions, and to know that his ear is ever open to our prayers, to reflect that *the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, dwelleth with the humble and contrite heart.*—these sentiments are the genuine grounds of consolation, in which a rational and immortal soul can finally acquiesce.

Light up the holy flame of devotion in your breasts. So far from suffering religion to remain a cold and languid theory, it will invigorate the affections and retain them in its cause. So far from retarding the business of life, it will give it spirit and alacrity. So far from throwing a damp on the gratifications of the world, it will heighten and refine them by adding the superior relish of its own. It is the foundation and support of all religion.

In the hour of retirement, and in the day of adversity, on the couch of sickness, and on the bed of sorrow, it will raise the languid head and heal the aching heart. In the place of short-lived visionary hopes, it will substitute those which are unfading and substantial. As you grow weaker and more infirm, it will gather strength to enliven the hours of solitude, infirmity, and old-age. It will support the weary pilgrim in the last stages of his journey, and shine as a holy taper to light his descent through the dark antichamber of the grave. And when the soul hovers, at last, over her earthly tabernacle, she will be elevated with holy rapture, and ardent to *escape out of the snare* and to assert that heaven which she hath often anticipated in the spirit of devotion.

OF Devotion the holy scriptures injoin two sorts, Private and Public.

When, in the acts of meditation and prayer, we aspire to an intercourse with the Most High, it is just that our attention should be abstracted from the world, and fixed on him alone. Amidst the avocations and the
bustle

D I S C O U R S E IX. 249

bustle of life, it is impossible to alienate our thoughts from earth, and to raise them up to heaven. Innumerable objects rush upon the mind with petulant intrusion to draw back our affections, before they can ascend. But, in the season of retirement, terrestrial cares may be excluded, and the soul remain calm and disengaged for religious exercises. It is possible too, that what is done in public may have some vain or interested motive, for *man looketh on the outward appearance only*; but what is transacted in private can spring from none but a sincere and pious intent, for *the Lord looketh on the heart*. Frequently did our saviour court solitude and silence for the exercise of devotion, and he hath left behind him this general command, *When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men*; but thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray unto thy father which is in secret, and thy father which is in secret shall reward thee openly. Yet he does not injoin an entire sequestration from society. He himself descended from the

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mountain to mix with the multitude, and, by his intercourse with the world, he overcame it. A total abstraction from society is an attempt to defeat the purpose of Providence, which hath placed us on the stage of life, as on a field of battle, where the objects of our warfare are the passions, injuries, and injustice of men, and the armour with which we are equipped, patience, faith, and charity. The world armed with its smiles and frowns is the enemy we are to vanquish. If you desert the world, how can you prove the armour by which you are to triumph? But it is necessary to retire frequently into the sacred retreat of devotion, in order to derive those spiritual resources, which may enable us to renew the contest, and to claim the prize.

And the reasons why we should join in public worship are equally prevalent. We are created for society, and experience the advantage of this natural bond in all the temporal concerns of life. And, since we are still more closely united by Christ our head, whose body we are, why should we not heighten our devotions by joining them together, and by sending them up in united

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concert? The church God hath consecrated as his house, the place of his more particular presence, and when *two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them.* That He, *who dwelleth in the high and holy place,* condescends to visit our assemblies, is the highest honour conferred on men. It should admonish us, when we approach his temple, to preserve an awful sense of Him into whose presence we are come, and to prepare our hearts to appear before him. Here let us combine all the noble affections of the soul to form one common sacrifice of prayer, thanksgiving and praise. Here, with united powers, let us call upon that invisible Being, *who is not far from every one of us.* Here let us pour out our souls before him. Here let us *worship him in the beauty of holiness.* How grand! how solemn! how divine! is a Christian assembly laying aside all distinction *high and low, rich and poor, one with another,* with one heart and with one voice sending up their prayers and praises to the God of heaven! Kindled by the sacred influence of example the flame of devotion takes fire from breast to

breast, and with an holy emulation they outvie each other in the love of God and in good-will to men. Gratitude is the divinest affection, as well as the sweetest endearment, of the conscious breast. With what heart-felt satisfaction does it operate towards an assistant fellow-creature? How tumultuous, then, must be the overflowings of the soul, when the most solemn occasions call her, in united concert, to make her offerings acceptable on the altar of praise and thanksgiving to the universal fountain of benificence, from whence her being, her preservation, and her redemption flow?

But we are ever to remember, *that God, who made the world and all things in it, seeing that he is Lord of Heaven and earth, is not worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing, seeing he gave to all life, and breath, and all things.* The worship and adoration of ten thousand choirs of men and angels, cannot add to that consummate happiness in which he is enshrined. Our prayers and aspirations ascend up to heaven, like the exhalations of the earth, only to return in showers of benediction upon ourselves.

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God is a Spirit, and the true worshippers shall worship him in Spirit and in truth. However our devotion may be modified, whether it be private or public, unless it spring from an humble and sincere heart, it will be languid and enfeebled, unable to reach the heaven it aims at. The success ascribed to the *publican*, who stood afar off and would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, evinces the importance of humility and contrition; whilst the example of holy David recommends a sincere and fervent zeal, *I will pray with my heart, and I will pray with my understanding also, I will sing with my heart and I will sing with my understanding also.*

But what gives devotion its final value, is that it subdues every sinful and sordid passion, and trains us to the functions of universal charity. Unaccompanied by this essential qualification it is only to insult the face of heaven. You sordid anchorite, who seek the calm retreat to let your heart sleep undisturbed over your useless riches, in vain do you prefer the offerings of your lips. The gates of heaven are shut against them, and can only be opened by the charity and

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humanity of your heart and by the liberality of your hand : How can your prayers tarnished with the rust of your possessions enter into the ears of Him who loveth *righteousness and mercy*, who hath commanded to *open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land*, and who gave these riches that you might make them shine by being a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow. You who are zealous towards God, but unjust to men, you who are assiduous to pray, but have locked out of your breast the feelings of a man and the love of a brother, first let your heart relent before it presumes to offer its oblations. Learn righteousness and practice mercy, then will your prayers be set forth in his sight as incense, and the lifting up of your hands as an evening sacrifice.——*Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God and he will abundantly pardon ; for we know that God heareth not sinners, but if a man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth,*

I beseech

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I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present yourselves a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may know what is the full and perfect will of God.

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DISCOURSE X.

ON BAPTISM.

GAL. iii. 27.

*As many as have been baptised into Christ,
have put on Christ.*

BESIDE Prayer and the modes of divine worship, our great Prophet hath appointed other means, by which the candidates for the high reward held out by his religion may procure Grace to enable them to perform their duty and to run the race of immortality. These are BAPTISM and THE SUPPER OF THE LORD.

These institutions are particular covenants between Christ and us, in which, "we are bound

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“ bound to perform the Condition of the
 “ Covenant of Grace ” ; and in which “ he
 “ engages to give us the priveleges of that
 “ Covenant, and particularly to support us by
 “ his Spirit. ” In these, men devote themselves
 to him by the most solemn obligation, as a
 soldier does when he is in the service of his
 Prince. They have hence obtained the name
 of SACRAMENTS or oaths, by which we
 enter as *faithful soldiers under his banner* who
 is *the captain of our salvation*, and engage to
 continue such to the last period of our lives.
 He hath *ordained them as pledges of his love* ;
 the one to adopt us into his heavenly family,
 and to initiate us into the promises of God ;
 the other *for a continual remembrance of his*
death, by which these promises were secured
 to our great and endless comfort.

And as legal instruments are executed with
 the formality of hands and seals, in the
 negotiation of civil contracts ; so, in these
 sacramental Covenants, our Lord hath ap-
 pointed visible and material *Instruments* as the
 seals of our spiritual obligations. By the
 formal execution of these, our attention is
 excited, our affections warmed, and our

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mind

minds impressed ; and we summon heaven and earth as witnesses of our vows. But they are calculated to cover other important meanings. The religious duties, to which the Sacraments oblige us, can be discharged only through the assistance of Grace, and their Instruments were appointed to be external *Signs* of that internal principle, by conveying a figurative and spiritual meaning. They are farther designed to be actual *Means*, by which the influence of the Spirit is shed down upon every religious observer of these vows. And, since what is inward and invisible cannot make its address to the senses nor deeply impress the mind, our Lord hath ordained them as visible *Pledges* and memorials to present to the senses a palpable assurance, that his spiritual aid will as surely be imparted, as they are duly executed and applied. As our bodies are washed by *Water* in baptism, so certainly will our souls be washed from sin ; as our bodies are nourished by *Bread* broken and *Wine* poured out and received, so certainly will our souls be nourished and renewed by that spiritual food

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food secured to us by wounding the body, and shedding the blood, of Christ.

Here we have a precise view of the two sacramental vows. They are not only *Covenants* obliging us to perform the Condition of the Gospel, but are also *Signs, Means,* and *Pledges* of that Grace which must enable us to discharge it. To engage were fruitless, unless we could perform. The Sacraments are calculated for both these ends; for, whilst they bind us to the performance, they supply us with the power. But we are ever to remember that the external observance of these solemn rites can be of no possible avail, unless we cherish the internal principle by discharging our duty in a sincere and honest heart. We will, first, investigate the *Institution* of Baptism, the propriety of the *Instrument*, and its spiritual correspondence; in the second place, we will take a nearer view of the *Obligations* and *Benefits*; and thirdly, endeavour to vindicate the practice of *baptizing infants*.

CONSCIOUS how strong a bias habit hangs upon the mind, in all his words, ac-

tions, and institutions, the divine Author of our religion accommodated himself to the language, sentiments, and usages of those, who were the immediate objects of his discipline. And, as every step which he pursued was marked with *that wisdom which is only from above*; so by this expedient he instilled the principles of his religion in the most natural and familiar way. He made himself more easily and clearly understood, and avoided the inconvenience of swelling his Gospel by a number of explanations. Being born and educated under the Jewish law, he was naturally drawn into allusions to its customs and discipline; and, when he had occasion to institute a solemn rite to serve important purposes in his new œconomy, he had immediate recourse to its ceremonial. Now Baptism was an ancient Jewish rite used on admission into their Covenant, which our Saviour espoused in its accustomed form, and transplanted into his religion. By this means the connexion between the Covenants was preserved, and there was, surely, the greatest propriety in continuing the same initiatory rite to the final dispensation, which had obtained

tained in that which was preparatory to it. To dignify it by a solemn annunciation for the high station it was afterwards to hold, the Fore-runner of the Messiah, who came in the *spirit and power of Elias*, appeared *preaching and baptizing*. To give it a still higher sanction, our Lord suffered himself to be baptized by him in the river Jordan; and at last he confirmed the institution by a direct command, *Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

The uses for which Baptism was ordained are important, and evince the propriety of the external Instrument. One is to initiate us into the Christian Covenant in solemn form. *As many as are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.* And since the great object of our religion is to extirpate sin, and to cleanse and purify the heart, *Water*, the proper element for washing and purifying, is adopted as the emblematic instrument of our admission. Another use of the institution is to distinguish the disciples of Jesus from all other men, of which distinction Baptism by *Water* is the characteristic ensign; thus we are all united
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under one head, and all baptized into one body. And if we view the institution in its most important end, as a Covenant engaging us to fulfil the condition of the Gospel, we shall acknowledge the propriety of that Instrument, by which we enter into such engagement.

All these formal and external offices of the baptismal vow have a reference to a spiritual and internal correspondence. That we are admitted by Baptism into the holy society of Christians, that we are distinguished as members of the catholic church, that we enter into covenant with our Redeemer, will be useless and ineffectual, unless we receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost to wash away our sins, to sanctify our hearts, and to enable us to fulfil the obligation of our vow. *Except a man be born of Water and the Spirit, he shall not see the kingdom of God.* We have Grace conveyed to us by the baptism of water, and it rests on the improvement of it, whether we shall be worthy to be baptized with that spiritual baptism which will seal us to the day of Redemption. Let us endeavour to *grow in this Grace*, to cherish and invigorate this celestial

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celestial principle ; for *he is not a Christian, who is one outwardly, neither is that baptism which is outwardly in the flesh ; but he is a Christian, who is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart in the spirit.* Proceed we to a view of the *Obligations and Benefits* of this sacred rite.

II. WHEN we *put on Christ* by being baptized in his name, beside the Covenant in which we engage, this figurative mode of speaking has a farther meaning, which implies the discharge of its *Obligations*. To lead men by his example to the performance of the duties he enjoined was a principle object of our Saviour's life. He assumed our nature to dispense the law from heaven, and to instruct us in his own person how to obey it. From him we have the precept, and in him the example too. His life was a continued strain of righteousness and mercy, and to *put on Christ* is to cloath ourselves in the robes of his universal obedience ; for *he who professeth to abide in him, must also walk even as he walked.* By baptism we oblige ourselves to perform the whole condition of
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the Gospel. Renouncing all profane and irreligious principles, abandoning all carnal inclinations and vicious practices, we devote ourselves to the faith and humble obedience of God the Father our beneficent Creator, of God the Son our merciful Redeemer, of God the Holy Ghost our spiritual Supporter, and engage to live under the influence of a penitential fear. *So many of us, therefore, as are baptized into Jesus Christ, are baptized into his death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we should walk in newness of life.*

The *Benefits* which result from the performance of these engagements, are all the privileges which were purchased by his meritorious exertions, who hath redeemed us by his love.—*Pardon* of all our offences original and actual.—The sanctifying influence of *Grace* to strengthen and support us.—The *Adoption* of sons and fellow citizens with the Saints.—*And if sons then heirs, heirs of God, and coheirs with Christ*, which constitutes the final benefit of the baptismal vow. This is the crown reserved for the faithful in heaven. This is the kingdom of *Glory* which
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will last for ever, in which we shall reign with Christ, in the bosom of the Father, in consummate happiness of soul and body.

III. THEY who embraced the Christian profession by baptism, in the earliest æra of the church, were persons of maturer age, who believed the Gospel on the evidences which they witnessed themselves, or on the immediate testimony of others: Afterwards, the *Infants* of believing parents were adopted into the Christian communion by the same ceremony; the reason of which is founded in the nature of Baptism as an ancient initiating rite—in the tenor of the Covenant into which they were admitted—and in the words of the institution itself.

1. Baptism, we have observed, was an ancient Jewish rite which our Saviour adopted in condescension to the usages and apprehensions of his disciples; and he certainly espoused it in its usual form, else, instead of facilitating their knowledge by this expedient, he would have embarrassed them the more by perverting its use. Now we know, on the authority of many ancient Jewish writers, that Baptism in conjunction with Circum-

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cision

cision was the public rite by which Children were initiated into their Covenant. Had he, however, changed its use, he would have been particularly express in marking the difference; but as no exception is found in the words of the institution, nor in any part of the sacred volume, we may rest assured that it was intended to be used in its ancient form.

2. That the Children of the Jews were interested in their Covenant equally with their parents is evident from that memorable passage, *Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, your little ones, and your wives, and the stranger that is in the camp; that thou (the whole collective body) shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath.* It is even extended to the unborn. *Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath, but with him that standeth here with us this day, before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.* And since the Christian Covenant is of a more benign and extensive genius than the Jewish, when our Lord instituted the same rite of initiation, he would not, surely, exclude Children from be-

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being thereby entitled to the privileges of his more gracious dispensation. The Covenant by Moses was a type or substitute of that by Jesus, and we may rest assured that Children are equally entitled to his Covenant, and of course to its initiating rite. But we have the words of an inspired Apostle, establishing this point in the most direct and forcible manner. *Repent and be baptized every one of you; for the Promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off.* He tells us that the Promise is universal, and commands us to make the rite of initiation universal too. The dispensation of the Gospel reaches to all ages and generations of men, and all have a right to be introduced to its benefits by the medium of that institution, which its omniscient Author thought convenient to ordain.

3. But Infant-baptism is grounded in the very words of the institution, *Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Surely children form no inconsiderable part of all nations. How can they possibly be excluded from this universal command?

THESE arguments advancing from three different quarters, supporting each other, and converging to the same point, are, we presume, a sufficient warrant for the practice of our church in baptizing infants. It is, however, objected, that as Baptism is not only an initiating rite, but also a covenant or vow, *Children* cannot understand the terms, nor engage for themselves ;—that they are incapable of discharging the obligations ;—and that the engagements of parents and friends cannot oblige them, when they arrive at a discretionary period of life.

1. The parties concerned are Christ and the Baptized. The benefits lie on the side of the former, and the duties on the side of the latter. If Christ admit the baptism of infants, the covenant will be effectual, notwithstanding their incapacity to know or to consent to it ; for he can accept their ignorance and innocence for the present, and give them his blessings in return. *He himself took them up in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them ;* and if they are susceptible of a blessing, they are capable of being baptized, which is the appointed way of
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introducing them to all the blessings of the Christian institution, and of placing them the more immediate objects of the divine protection.

And though infants are unable to covenant in their own persons, yet to consult the advantage of his child is a duty incumbent on every parent. He may dedicate him to religion on one hand, and Christ may receive him on the other, notwithstanding his ignorance and inability. And, since the benefits are not to be obtained without performing the stipulated duties at a competent age, any other person may engage as a *Sponsor*, that he shall then discharge them. This is an act of the high benevolence performed in behalf of the baptized, and, when seconded by good instructions, is as meritorious an office as can be discharged. And should he abandon, in his future conduct, the obligations of his vow, the Sponsor will nevertheless be entitled to reward for his work of charity. Children are persons in the Law. They have many rights belonging to them, which are secured by the intervention of legal instruments, in which they enter into covenant by the
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medium of trustees, who engage in their names, that they shall discharge the obligations at some future date. If they neglect such discharge, they forfeit the advantages without deriving any detriment to the trustees. By the Covenant of Grace children have a right to an immortal inheritance. Baptism is the subordinate covenant by which their title is secured. Sponsors are the trustees acting in their behalf. And, as it would be unjust to deprive a child of his temporal property, by rejecting his name out of a legal instrument; so it is infinitely more just to prohibit him from that which is eternal, by omitting to put in his baptismal claim.

2. The incapacity of children to discharge its obligations is no bar to their partaking of this sacred rite, as it is not necessary a covenant should be fulfilled by both parties immediately, and at the same instant of time. How many contracts occur, where one part of the agreement is performed many years before the other? And why may not He who redeemed them by his love, and in whose estimation *a thousand years are as one day*, confer upon infants his heavenly benediction, accept,

accepting the performance of their obligations at a future date? He does not require our duty before it is possible, but when it is entirely practicable; and, if it be then religiously performed, it will seal the covenant, confirm the benefits, and secure the reward.

3. Nor let the reprobate, when he enters upon the province of the reasonable man, hope to shake off the obligations of the baptismal vow, on the shallow pretence that he was an infant when it was made, and did not give it the sanction of his own consent. Let him reflect, that He, who commanded him to be baptized, is his Saviour and his God, to whose will he is entirely subservient without his previous stipulation or assent. Let him look up with reverence and gratitude to the Author of this holy institution, which is imposed upon him by superior wisdom for the advancement of his happiness, and repair to the performance of his duty with a willing mind. If he resist, and refuse by his religious conduct to ratify his vow, let him tremble at the arm that is charged with vengeance. Rather let him consult his greatest happiness, and crown the charity of his friends in devoting him to religion, and the love of his

his Saviour in receiving him to grace, by a voluntary and strenuous discharge of all his religious obligations.

BUT however scriptural and expedient the baptism of infants, yet when sudden illness or unexpected accident hurries them off, before the ceremony can be performed, no doubt remains, but that they will be received by Him who always accepts a good intention in the room of an action, and that he will save them by his love. Let us not, however, delay dedicating our children to his service by that institution which he has appointed, that they may be translated into the family of God. Whilst adorned with the robe of innocence, let us *present them unto the Lord as lambs without blemish*, who will wash them in his blood, and endue them with his Spirit. Let us commit them to his care, who is merciful to all ages and degrees of men, and who cannot but protect the tender innocence of those, whom he has proposed as a pattern to all who would be subjects of his kingdom. And let us crown these auspicious beginnings with a virtuous and religious education.

DISCOURSE XI.

ON THE

SUPPER OF THE LORD.

1. CORINTHIANS xi. 26.

As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.

HAVING considered the nature and intent of the two sacramental institutions, and the place which they hold in the system of religion, before we descend to the particular subject of this discourse, we will take a distant view of the intimate connexion that subsists between them.

They are both derived from the appointment of Christ. They both come under the notion of covenants or vows. The parties

are the same in both. Both injoin the same obligations, and confer the same benefits. They are both distinguished by external instruments, and have both in view the same spiritual end. In nothing are they found to differ, but in the occasions to which they serve, and in the instruments employed. If we draw them together and place them side by side, from whatever point we view them; we shall discover that close affinity, which will support us in considering the one as the counterpart of the other, though this connexion may not be particularly remarked by any of the inspired writers.

And if we weigh their different Occasions and external Instruments, and remark how they subserve and correspond to each other in the œconomy of Christian life, we shall be the more strongly convinced of their native and inviolable affinity. Baptism is appropriated as the rite of initiation into the communion of the Church, by which we are bound in a solemn obligation to obey the Gospel. But, alas! how repeatedly have we infringed this sacred vow? We have corrupted or extirpated the seeds of Grace,
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and, from the nature of this rite, which only devotes us to religion at first, we cannot have recourse to it to renew our engagements, and to reinflate ourselves in the favour of heaven. Out of the superlative measure of his love, our divine Master hath, therefore, given us the institution of the Eucharist, by which we enjoy repeated opportunities, through the future periods of life, of repairing our broken vows, and of appearing again before the throne of Grace. Whilst the one opens the treasures of religion, the other secures us their possession. Whilst Baptism can alone entitle us to the promises of the Gospel, the Eucharist can alone confirm them to us. One of these institutions introduces or maintains the rights of the other, and thus the Christian œconomy is made complete. That sacramental covenant which was opened at the font, meets its close and consummation at the altar; and the principles of the new life, which came of *Water*, are cherished and confirmed by the mystic food of *Bread and Wine*.

Having descended, in the last discourse, to a particular view of the *Institution* of Baptism, its *Uses* and internal correspondence;

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together with its *Obligations* and *Benefits*; proceed we to an illustration of the Lord's Supper after a similar plan. And it may be proper to recommend a suitable *Preparation* before we presume to approach the altar,

I. As Baptism was translated from the Jewish ceremonial into the Christian religion, so the Eucharist was borrowed from an ancient observance of the Jews. After they had celebrated the Passover, they washed their feet, and then sat down to an after-repast †, at which the father of the family took bread, and, having given thanks, he distributed to the whole house, and then the cup; and the feast of charity concluded in an hymn. In exact conformity to this, at the *Institution* of the Eucharist, after *eating the Passover with his disciples*, *Jesus riseth from the supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself*; After that, he poured water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with a towel wherewith he was girded *. And, as they did eat, he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it to them, and said, *Take, eat, this is my body which is*

† the Postcœnium. * John. xiii. 4, 5. broken

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for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying, drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me †. And, when they had sung an hymn, they went up into the mount of Olives ‡, and the awful scene of his sacrifice immediately ensued. This was the decisive mark to which all religious rites and ceremonies had been directed from the beginning of the world, and in which they found their repose and end. It was likewise the point from which religious institutions were to flow to the end of time, and to which their use and signification are to be referred. The Passover more especially anticipated this event. After our Saviour had celebrated that rite with his disciples, he dismissed it for ever; for he considered the oblation of himself, which was immediately at hand, as actually completed, and we find him instituting another rite in its room, which was to extend its use to all future ages.

† See Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28. Mark xiv. 22, 23, 24. Luke xxii. 29, 30. 1. Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25.

‡ Mark xiv. 26.

He pronounced the words of the institution with an immediate reference to his body and blood, which are the foundation of that Covenant, from which our redemption and salvation are derived. *This bread is my body, which was given for you—This cup is my blood which was shed for you.* These expressions are highly figurative and emblematical. They glow with very sentiment; and an inferior critic can discern that the energy and beauty of such modes of speaking would be entirely lost, if directly understood. It is impossible our Saviour could mean that the bread and wine were his identical body and blood; for when he spake these words, he was not crucified; his body was intire, and visibly different, and his blood not shed. Had he intended to be positively and directly understood, he would have disproved the evidence of sense, on which the credit of his religion ultimately depends; and the last action of his life would have destroyed the use of every other, and have subverted the foundation of that illustrious system he had been labouring to erect. He proposed them only as representatives of his body and blood, and

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commanded them to be applied *in remembrance* of him. As the Paschal Lamb was a sacrifice representing and anticipating the one great and eternal sacrifice to come, so the Eucharist is a sacrifice representing and commemorating the one great and eternal sacrifice that is past.

THE *Uses* of this institution are important, and will illustrate the propriety of its external instruments. Baptism alludes to the sacrifice of Christ, for *we are baptized into his death*; but the Eucharist is a stronger and more particular memorial of it, for *as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come*. It is called the *New Testament in his blood*, and was instituted in memory of the Covenant, which was founded in his merits and sealed with his blood. And what more apposite emblem could be adopted than *Bread broken and Wine poured out*, of that body which was wounded, and of that blood which was shed to redeem the nations? By *setting forth evidently before us, Christ crucified among us*, in that visible and emblematic form which he himself ordained,

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this sacrament is an act of high devotion, in which our worship and obedience, our gratitude and praise constitute the most perfect sacrifice that mortals can present. Impressed with a train of devout ideas, animated with the contemplation of the innumerable blessings devolved on men, whilst the symbols of their immediate causes are before us, we cannot fail being inspired with every great and good affection. And, whilst we glow in the ardour of this devotion, we shall be zealous to become perfect in every good work; *for the love of God constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died and rose again.*

This institution is also appointed to cherish and promote that essential branch of our religion, *love of God, and good-will to men.* As by baptism we are enlisted under one head even Christ, to be members of his body, so by partaking of the Eucharist we are all made joints of the same body, and members of one another, united to him and to each other by the spiritual communion of his body

body and blood. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? We are not only obliged by the strongest ties of love and gratitude to Christ our head, but also by similar ties of love and charity to our fellow members; for, if he so loved us as to die for our sakes, we ought not only to love him, but also to love one another, to be cemented to him and to each other by the intercourse of love. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. The Paschal Lamb was eaten with unleavened bread, and not a bone of it was broken, as an emblem of uninterrupted harmony and unbroken peace: And since Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, we are exhorted, in allusion to the ancient rite, to keep the feast of Bread and Wine not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

But, that we engage with our Redeemer to

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distinguish

distinguish ourselves his friends by doing whatsoever he commands us, is the most important purpose of the institution. And, surely, *Bread and Wine*, which enable our bodies to discharge the functions of life, are an apposite emblem of that mystic food, which will qualify our souls to discharge their spiritual obligations.

HOWEVER useful and sublime its offices, the external application of this sacrament will be ineffectual, unless accompanied by a spiritual and internal power. In vain do we commemorate the death of Christ, in vain we partake of the feast of charity, in vain do we do join issue with our Redeemer to fulfil his law, unless we are actuated and empowered by the Spirit of Grace. This is the great end which the institution has in view. The external instruments are of divine appointment, and are assuredly accompanied with a special blessing. But whether we shall reap its salutary fruits, depends on our own concurrence with it, on our sincerity, on our desires, on our exertions. Though in the literal sense, all partake of what is called the
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body and blood of Christ, yet the virtuous receivers alone *eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood spiritually and effectually*. They alone are nourished by that internal food derived from his death which constitutes them *members of his flesh and of his bones*, and which endues them with the principles of a new life.

II. IN the institution of this solemn rite, our Lord is particularly emphatic in these words, *Do this in remembrance of me*. By remembering him we should not rest satisfied in recollecting that there was once such an extraordinary person in the world. We should remember him to more useful and important purposes. We should contemplate his divinity and glory. We should dwell on his stupendous love to men in his incarnation, on the temptations he was exposed to, the perfect obedience of his life, the doctrines which he taught, the precepts he enjoined, the cross upon which he triumphed, and the death by which he died. And we should especially revolve upon the relation in which he stands to us; the *Benefits* he has obtained, and the *Duties* he has enjoined. If, in this

sacrament, we revive the *Obligations* of our baptismal vow with a sincere and fervent zeal, our Lord hath engaged to *pardon* our offences, to receive us unto *Grace*, to establish us by *Adoption*, and to crown us with *Glory*. *Who so eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

III. Since then by this holy institution we are admitted into league with Him, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, our attention should be most seriously bent upon our thoughts and actions. St. Paul exhorts us, to *examine ourselves, and so to eat of that bread, and to drink of that cup*. On ourselves, on our preparations, on our resolutions, on the general goodness of our lives, all our success depends. If under the auspice of humble prayer, a grateful heart, and virtuous conduct, we introduce ourselves to this feast of charity and mercy, we shall place ourselves the special objects of that spiritual influence, which will seal us to the day of redemption.

We ascend the altar to repair the breaches
of

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of the covenant in which we engaged at the font, and to renew its obligations. Let us then, review the tenor of our baptismal vow, and examine when and how it has been infringed. Its obligation was to do all the commandments of God. Let us, therefore, adjust our conduct by the standard of the Gospel. Let us enquire how we have discharged the duties of Faith, Obedience and Repentance; and as Charity is more particularly essential to the institution, let us ask our hearts whether that celestial principle be grounded there. Not only the more flagrant acts of disobedience, but the more private defects should be examined and chastised. Such sins as are aggravated by being deliberate and habitual, should be seriously revised, and the reflection of having wilfully and repeatedly insulted the most gracious of Beings, cannot fail to leave a bitter sting of repentance in the breast.

Let us not however impose upon ourselves by resting in this *Examination* as itself an end. It is only the prelude to future improvement, without which it is totally divested of its use. When we feel it add fire to our
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resolution and vigor to our faith ; when our vitals are warmed with the love of virtue, and our hearts glow in the ardor of benevolence ; in that auspicious hour let us advance with humble confidence, and receive the hallowed emblems of benediction and grace. Those devout affections, which are kindled at the altar, will be cherished and improved by supernatural aid ; we shall *proceed from virtue to virtue, and from grace to grace, till we arrive at the fulness of the perfection of the stature of Christ,*

As these sacramental vows reverently made and religiously observed, add life to our faith and energy to our virtue, so the sins committed after them carry an additional load of guilt ; for, beside their natural abhorrence from the holiness of the Deity, they are aggravated by the violation of the most sacred engagements sanctioned and enforced by divine appointment. The sacrifice of the Son of God *purchasing our eternal redemption* is the subject of these vows, and to break them is to *trample upon the cross*, and to reject the work of redemption with contempt. They who come

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to the supper of the Lamb, and make a covenant with him by commemorating his sacrifice, redouble every obligation ; and if they descend from the altar of purest incense to mix in the pollutions of the world, by their actions they proclaim, that they consider Christ as the minister of sin, and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith they profess to be sanctified, an unholy thing. This is to receive unworthily, and St. Paul hath warned us of the consequence ; Who so shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of Christ ; he eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Not that, after we descend from the altar, an unfinning obedience is expected at our hands, which is incompatible with the condition of human nature ; but as there are many colours and degrees of sin, we are required, after every sacramental engagement, to abandon such vices as are habitual and deliberate and of a deeper stain, and to make fresh advances in the paths of virtue. The altar is erected not as a terror, but as an asylum, to the sinner, and he should not suffer

fer himself to be discouraged or driven from it by ill-grounded apprehensions. No office of religion is so immediately designed for his spiritual improvement. None can so effectually contribute to it. All are commanded to observe it, and to disobey this command is an aggravated sin. Let none abstain from the holy table, unless it be the flagrant and notorious offender. And, if such offender can form a resolution to forsake his sins, let him prepare his heart, and advance in hope. He can apply to no remedy so effectual, as prayer and this sacrament; and though, at first, he may only make feeble advances, yet let him not desist. The transition from sin to righteousness is always gradual and progressive, and no man was ever converted in a moment but by a miraculous interposition.

And if, after he hath put up his vows, he should happen to let slip his integrity, and to be drawn back into the same depth of sin which he had engaged to relinquish, let him not finally despair. Let him lament his faults with deeper sorrow, pray for assistance with more fervent zeal, watch over his conduct with more earnest care, strengthen his
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resolution with greater fortitude, and again commemorate the merits of his redeemer, and claim anew the influence of Grace. *The Lord is merciful and long-suffering, and casteth none away, and we are assured, that when the wicked man turneth himself away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*

The duty of frequenting this altar of purest incense to offer up our vows, is indispensable, and urgent; and, under such gracious and benign encouragement; no one need tremble to approach. Was it requisite to be baptized? It is equally necessary to ratify the obligations in which we engaged at the font, by our obligations at the altar. Christ himself ordained the institution with the greatest solemnity, and in the most awful and critical moment. He did it the honour to administer himself, and commanded all to partake of it; and since the advantages which attend it are all the privileges of his immortal Covenant, Pardon, Grace, Adoption, and Glory, *what shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us?—We will take the*

cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord, we will pay our vows in the presence of all his people. Since we are baptized by the same water into one body, at the same table let us all partake of that one body. Children of the same Father, members of the same family, brothers of the same redemption, destined to the same immortal fellowship, candidates for the same hope of eternal life, and coheirs of the same glorious inheritance, with one heart and one mind let us jointly celebrate this feast of charity, commemorating the dying love of our Redeemer, engaging to fulfil his law, having our breasts inspired with an holy sympathy, and kindled with heavenly fire. Let us join in a devout and fervent zeal. Let benevolence beam from every eye. Let every bosom by mutual infection catch the sacred flame of gratitude and praise. And thus, by joining religiously and frequently in the renewal of our vows, we shall be established in virtue and grace, our bodies will be made temples of the Holy Ghost, and our souls prepared for the future participation of God.

DISCOURSE XII.

The END displayed.

ACTS xvii. 30, 31.

He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

BEFORE we close this immortal argument, let us draw together the heads of this compendious system, and exhibit them in a single point of view, in order to display the *End* of our religion in the most striking light, as well as the *Means* which are to conduct us to it.

HAPPINESS in a future life is the **END** of Religion. The human **SOUL** is the **SUBJECT**, which is to enjoy it. **GOD** is the **OBJECT** from whom it must proceed. And

the MEANS of obtaining it, is TO PLEASE HIM by doing his perfect will.—We traced the WILL of God by the lights of *Conscience*, *Reason*, and *Revelation*; and by the same lights discovered man's native *Inability* to perform it. God created him originally able both to know and to do his duty, and engaged to make him happy on the performance of it; this is the *Covenant of Works*. His DEPRAVATION was derived from the voluntary disobedience of his Primitive Parents, whence Sin and Death ensued, with loss of happiness.—The love of God interposed and projected the plan of man's redemption, by which his immortal attributes are reconciled, and our title to happiness founded anew. He gave his eternal Son to take upon him our nature, and to discharge the Condition of the Covenant of Works, by perfect OBEDIENCE to his will. This is the foundation of the *Covenant of Grace*.—Christ is the MEDIATOR of this new Covenant, which office divides into three branches; that of *Prophet*, to teach men its Condition, and to give them the law of the Gospel; that of *Priest*, to atone for their sins; and that of
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King, to support them by his Grace here, and to reign over them in Glory hereafter.

—These extraordinary truths were communicated to the world by REVELATION, of which *Prophecies, Miracles &c.* are the infallible test. The Patriarchs, and ancient Jews had them by Promise divinely ascertained: Christians have them in actual enjoyment confirmed by stronger evidences.—The HOLY SCRIPTURES, which contain this Revelation, are proved to be *ancient, authentic, and uncorrupted*; and the WRITERS of them to have been *capable and credible* witnesses, and *honest* relators, of what they have advanced.

—The Condition of the Covenant of Grace, I mean the part incumbent on men, is divided into FAITH—OBEDIENCE—and REPENTANCE.—And since these cardinal duties are above the capacity of our native powers, our Saviour hath promised to assist our endeavours by the influence of divine Grace, and to interceed with his Father in heaven,

—He hath farther appointed efficacious means, by which we may apply for this spiritual assistance, by the institutions of a HOLY WORSHIP—BAPTISM—and
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the EUCHARIST.

Such are the extraordinary MEANS, through which we are to advance to the END of our religion, and Christ, we plainly see, is the only way to it. *I am the way, says he, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me.*

THIS illustrious End, which is no less than the perfection and happiness of our immortal souls, commences in a future, unchangeable period, and in an unknown region situate beyond the barrier of the grave. Incompatible with the unhallowed scenes of this world the reward of our religion is reserved for a more perfect and exalted state. Its business is opened here, and here the characters, which appear and disappear on the stage of life, receive their decisive cast; but its consummation reaches into a future world. Let us, then, lift up the veil which separates the mortal from the immortal state, and, by that infallible light held out by revelation, let us look at and contemplate the issue of things. And, since the high Rewards, which are promised to the righteous, and the Punish-
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ments equally transcendent, which are denounced against the wicked, are the immortal sanction which enforces every Doctrine and Precept of our religion, a review of them, as they stand in the irreversibile decrees of God, may form no improper conclusion to these discourses. Devote we, therefore, this occasion to contemplate the *Resurrection, Future Judgment, and the Kingdom of the Just.*

I. WE are informed by the infallible oracles, that there will be a general RESURRECTION both of the just and unjust; that, at a certain day, *all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; that our souls will be united to our bodies, and our bodies changed; this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.*

This doctrine, however mystic and sublime, is no way repugnant to the dictates of reason; for his almighty arm, which first erected our souls and bodies out of nothing, united them together, and endued them with the principles of life, is not shortned, that
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he should not save us, by raising us from the grave. However modified and dispersed abroad, He can remand back all the parts of the human body, arrange them in their proper order, spiritualize their contexture, rejoin the soul, and immortalize the new-erected fabric. Abraham, Job, the Prophets, and ancient Jews reposed all their hopes and confidence in this doctrine. David exclaims in transport, Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead, and shall the dead arise and praise thee! Shall thy loving-kindness be shewed in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction! Thy dead men, saith Isaiah, shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise, awake and sing, thou that dwellest in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead! And our Lord not only assured his Apostles, in direct terms, of this important truth; but confirmed it to their senses by raising Lazarus and two others, and, at last, exhibited the most palpable evidence of it by raising himself. In this risen state he conversed with them for a succession of forty days, and was the familiar object of all their senses.

Now

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Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. By raising himself he hath evinced the possibility of raising us. His resurrection is both an earnest and an example of ours. Behold he that cometh, shall come, and will not tarry. They that remain alive at his approach, we are informed, will not die, but will be changed in a moment, at the last trump. The dead in Christ shall rise first, then they which are alive shall be caught up together, neither shall they die any more, for they are equal to the Angels of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Our Lord's resurrection is a final proof that he hath made a complete ransom for Sin, and disarmed it of its sting; for, as Death was the effect of Sin, by conquering the one he hath actually triumphed over the other. Through death, and his triumph over it, he hath destroyed him that had the power of death; even the Devil, and delivered those who all their life time were subject unto bondage. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who maketh intercession for us.

Of the manner in which the august scene of a general resurrection will be executed; and of the particular nature of our future bodies, we are left without any direct information, as of things too sublime for mortal comprehensions. We are, indeed, assured that, whatever changes our bodies may undergo, every one will have his own, and that, after its reunion with the soul, he will be the identical person he was in this life; for God *giveth to every seed his own body*. But of one thing, which is the most important to be known, we may rest in the most positive assurance, that our condition in the next life will entirely depend on our conduct in this—whether we shall *rise to the resurrection of life, or to the resurrection of damnation*—when we revive at the awakening call of Jesus, whether we shall succeed to happiness and glory, or to shame and endless woe.

II. THIS will be immediately succeeded by the awful scene of a general JUDGMENT, before the most impartial and infallible tribunal. In no belief have men in every age and nation more unanimously coincided, than

than in that of a future judgment. Conscience, his dread vicegerent within the breast, anticipates and represents the great Judge at the end of the world. Go to the Roman history and view the character of Tiberias Emperor of the world. See him, in the midst of sovereign power, accumulated wealth, and all terrestrial glory, wrung with anguish and tortured with remorse. Hear him exclaiming that he was miserable as the Gods could make him, through the awful expectation of a day to come. Then turn your eye upon the page of Plato, and read the solemn description of his master's death. Labouring under the sentence of the most iniquitous judgment, condemned to suffer in the cause of virtue, you will behold the portrait of Socrates invested in the smiles of conscious integrity. Fortified and becalmed in that hour of conflict, when nature feels her great convulsion, unshaken by misfortune, undepressed by fear, you will see him drink the fatal cup with the complacency and satisfaction arising from the silent plaudit of his heart, and from the express assurance of *appearing before more equal judges*. Contemplate these

opposite characters. How directly do they point to that grand tribunal, which every breast is instructed to recognize, which is the foundation of all religion, the support of moral conduct, the bond of society, and the sanction of laws?

This essential article of our faith receives farther confirmation from the unequal, and seemingly unjust, distribution of things, which marks the present state. In this life vice and virtue are observed to share an undistinguished lot. For a season divine Justice retires behind the curtain, and leaves men at full liberty to act their voluntary parts, and to ascertain their characters. As soon as the play of life is over, and the terrestrial scene is closed, she will step forth to adjust her rights, to vindicate her authority, and to resume her throne. *Verily there is a reward for the righteous. Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth.*

But this fundamental doctrine is confirmed by the irresistible light of revelation. *God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

dead. Not content with barely announcing this truth, the Gospel affords us more palpable and particular evidence. The resurrection of Christ was exhibited as a visible evidence of a future state, and here an appeal is made to it to demonstrate the certainty of an ensuing judgment.

The Father judgeth no man, but commiteth all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, as they honour the Father. The person destined to preside at the last tribunal and to pronounce the irreverfible sentence, is the same who hath redeemed us with his blood and will raise us by his power. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or evil. All temporal dignities and distinctions will be levelled and annulled, for the dead small and great shall appear before God. Riches will dissolve into dust, save that part which hath been consecrated by acts of charity, and honours will vanish like exhalations. Learning and worldly wisdom will be of no avail, unless they have been directed

directed to useful purposes. A heart religious, honest, and sincere, humble, holy, and devout, humane, peaceful, and charitable will only stand the test, and alone will triumph in that day. However partially the hand of Providence may dispense her favours here, that is set apart as a day of universal retribution, when all inequalities will be adjusted, all seeming defects will be removed, unerring Justice will erect her scale, and display to the wondering universe the wisdom and the righteousness of the ways of God. *With him there is no respect of persons; but unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom God hath committed much, of him will he ask the more.*

God hath given him authority to exercise judgment, *because he is the Son of man.* Being personally acquainted with human nature he can make a just allowance in judging of human infirmities. And what can so much encourage the humble Christian to persevere in his duty, as to reflect, that he is to render an account before Him, who called himself a brother, and who descended into the weakness and humility of his nature? Yet let us not

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be high-minded, but fear. Let us take care lest He, who came once to save us, come again to condemn us; and lest the meek and merciful Jesus change the humility of his person and the benignity of his aspect, and cloath himself with terror and destruction.

And since our future eternal destiny will depend on our conduct here; for *if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, where the tree falleth, there shall it be,* of what critical importance is the hour of death? The soul, when she issues from her earthly tenement, can never be recalled. How valuable are the moments of this short uncertain life, since by the use of them every moment of the next eternal life will be determined. *Whatever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.* The hour of death is a critical decisive hour. Then the book of our accounts is shut never to be revised or corrected, and never to be opened till the day of judgment, when every leaf will be unfolded, and every page explained. That soul which is fled must be accountable for all,
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and bear the verdict of her doom to all eternity. O what amazing change are we then to undergo ! *Let us exercise ourselves unto godliness in this life, to strive and to run, to fight and to stand fast, that we may experience a glorious change.*

THE form of this awful judgment is represented in scripture in these solemn terms : *At the end of the world, the Son of man shall come and descend from heaven in the clouds, with great power and glory, and all the holy Angels with him to judge the quick and the dead. Then shall he sit on his white throne, from whose face the earth and heaven shall flee away ; and the earth and the sea shall give up their dead, and all nations shall be gathered before him, and the book of life shall be opened, and they shall be judged out of those things which are written in the book, according to their works. Then shall the Angels come forth, and separate the wicked from the just, and He shall separate one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left.—Then shall he say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed*

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blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world.—Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

At the close of this solemnity, the righteousness of the sentence will be announced by the joint acclaim of the glorious inhabitants of heaven, of Cherubims and Seraphims, of Principalities and Powers, and it will be sealed by their voice: For all the Angels of heaven shall stand round about the throne, and fall before the throne upon their faces, and worship God saying *AMEN*—The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever! *AMEN*.

Then shall the Son of man, as he comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, send his Angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his Elect from

the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other, that where he is, there they may be also.

III. *Then cometh the end, when the Son shall have destroyed Sin and Death, and when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. He will, then resign his temporal kingdom to God even the Father, and be subject unto him, that God may be all in all. Retiring into the unity of the Godhead he will reign with him together with the holy Angels and the Spirits of just men made perfect, and be glorified with that glory, which he had before the world was. This is the crown of righteousness laid up for them which have kept the faith, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give to them that love his appearing. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my father in his throne.*

What will be the joys of the Blessed in this exalted kingdom, no mortal apprehension can divine. Revelation represents them to be great and glorious, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered

entered into the heart of man to conceive. But though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, this we know, that when God appears, we shall be like him. We may presume, that the happiness of heaven will consist in a freedom from sin, and consequently in a freedom from pain; that the spirit of the Just will flourish out in all those virtues and graces, the rudiments of which they imbibed on earth; that these divine qualities will be cultivated and enlarged with still new accessions, and that from their exercise they will derive exquisite and transcendent bliss; that, as they advance from one period to another in the regions of eternity, they will travel on from perfection to perfection, and from glory to glory, making still nearer approaches to Him who is superlative in perfection; and that their happiness will keep pace with their improvement. This is, perhaps, the highest and most rational idea that mortals can form of immortal glory. At least, it is pure, and springs from an unpolluted source. However inadequate, it represents a glory that is unfading and capable of an endless increase. Though without impiety we may hazard a humble supposition,

Let us not indulge imaginations. The glory of heaven is as exalted as itself. Let us rest our hopes on the infallible oracles. To figure out to the weak eye of the human intellect that consummate state which is incapable of being directly expressed, the scripture employs the most sublime and forcible images drawn from every thing that is great and splendid. *There will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. He that sitteth on his throne in heaven shall dwell among them, and he shall be their God and they shall be his people. They shall behold his face and he will make it shine upon them. And he will wipe all tears from all eyes, and there shall be no death or sorrow, neither any more pain, In this holy city there is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city hath no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into it.*
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And there shall not in any wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Whilst we inhabit this earthly tabernacle an impenetrable cloud hovers over the confines of eternity, and our knowledge of spiritual things is imperfect and obscure. The Father of the universe is no immediate object. After death, if we be happy, our nature will be sublimed, and our organs cleared. The film, which is spread over the carnal eye, will be removed; we shall see God face to face, and shall know him even as also we are known. And what can be wanting to heighten and complete our happiness, when we are admitted to the presence and enjoyment of the eternal fountain of light and truth? No sublunary pleasure can compare with that which results from the exercise of our intellectual powers on deserving objects. To contemplate the Deity as he shines in the face of his creation, to trace the operations of his creative and providential hand, to climb up by the scale of reason from the work to the work-master, to follow him
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out of the natural into his moral world, and from thence into the world of Grace, is the sublimest, the most rational, and delectable employment of the human mind. How abundantly, then, will our ethereal and enlightened souls exult in the unforbidden discovery of all truth ! How will they triumph in viewing the infinite glories and beatitudes of the Godhead; especially as knowledge will be free from error and flush intuitively upon them without laborious deductions ? But, above all, what celestial transport will they derive from imitating the Author of all perfection ! And how inconceivably will these joys be heightened by the holy sympathy of the inhabitants of heaven, whose unenvied happiness and glory will perpetually spring from the glory and happiness of each other ! All the diviner pleasures and dearer intercourses will be renewed, and the refined endearment of particular attachment will be crowned with the sublimer exercise of universal love. Together the whole assembly of the Elect will *be called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and will be joined to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to Jesus the Medi-*
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ator of the New Covenant; when the celestial hosts will sing *Hallelujah*, congratulate their conquest, welcome their approach, and celebrate their glory.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father, and they that are wise shall, in their glorified bodies, shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.—Blessed are they that do the commandments of God, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city; where the Lord shall give them light, and they shall drink of the pleasures of the river of the water of life, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

SUCH are the beatitudes of the world to come. So exalted will be the glory of the inhabitants of heaven. But the exquisite and endless torments, which will be inflicted on the unhappy in the opposite region, are too great to conceive, and too tremendous to express—where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. They will be tortured with a terrible conscience within and a more terrible fire without; for by the worm is denot-

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ed the remorse of sin preying upon the heart aggravated with the black and forlorn prospect of lost happiness and lasting pain; and by *fire* is represented the infliction of positive and corporeal punishment—the lake that burneth with fire. This is the second death, which will last for ever; for every one shall be salted with fire—that very instrument which would seem to put a period to their existence, will be converted into a means of preserving them entire, as immortal victims of the divine vengeance. *

God Almighty grant that we may be properly affected by this love and terror of the Lord. And seeing that we look for such things, let us be diligent that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And may the God of peace that brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

* See Hurd Sermon, XI.

TO CONCLUDE.

BEFORE we take final leave of this exalted field, let us make a stand to look back and survey its general confines. **FUTURE HAPPINESS**, or **Eternal Life**, is the gift of God. The Means of procuring this gift, are the **MERITS** of Christ. The Means which will entitle us to these Merits, are **FAITH**, **OBEDIENCE**, and **REPENTANCE**. The Mean which will enable us to perform these duties, is **DIVINE GRACE**. The Means of obtaining this Grace, are **PRAYER**, and the pious observance of the **SACRAMENTS**. And if we weigh the ultimate *End* in view, as well as the different *Means* employed, we may rest in full assurance, that, though they proceed from the unmerited bounty of the Almighty, such is the project of the immortal plan, all our success will finally depend upon **OURSELVES**.

Such is the amazing dependence and œconomy of the system of Divinity. Though the treasures of Revelation were, by divine appointment, delivered to men at very different times, in very different forms, and by

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different persons, and are of consequence promiscuously dispersed through the Holy Scriptures with a great and irregular beauty; yet when they are drawn together and arranged in such a manner as to be taken in at one view, the plan of our Redemption appears so plain and easy, that the meanest capacity may comprehend it, so uniform and consistent, that every one must admire it, so reasonable and just, that all must be convinced of its truth, so wonderfully good and indispensibly useful, that it is a subject worthy the sublimest faculties of man to contemplate and revere.

THE END.

